



LIBRARY OF HEAVEN'S PATH

by Heng Sao Tian Ya



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Library of Heaven's Path

– Tian Dao Tu Shu Guan –

- Volume 10 -

-Author-

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Chapter 901

Go Ahead!

They had all been wondering how Zhang Shi would make use of his three sentences.

If he wanted to display his capability, be it pill forging, the Way of Medicine, smithing, or demonic tunes, he would surely have been able to capture everyone's attention easily and win their respect.

If he were to talk about his contributions, retrieving Elder Wu Yangzi's corpse and contributing his forging technique without asking for any compensation, saving the Hongyuan royal family's Bodhi Saint Tree, taming all of the spirit beasts and saint beasts of the Cloudmist Ridge... All of these were incredible feats that wouldn't pale in comparison to the previous generations of principals.

Even if it was in the field of imparting knowledge, while his direct disciples might not possess high cultivation realms, their understanding of cultivation and battle techniques far surpassed most 6-star master teachers, such that even the head of the Martial School had personally invited them to become the guest elders of the academy...

Regardless of which one it was, he would surely be able to attract the attention of all of the predecessors in an instant... Yet, instead of speaking about any of that, he had actually asked to pummel the predecessors instead!

Big Brother, we are master teachers, not hoodlums!

The master teachers beneath the stage were all dumbstruck. Countless elders had pulled out their beards unwittingly, causing blood to flow down their lower jaws, but it seemed as if they hadn't noticed it at all.

They had seen those who had boasted about their capabilities and accomplishments to win the admiration of others; they had also seen those who resorted all means in order to obtain power... But never had they seen anyone who threatened to lay his hands on his predecessors after inviting them over!

More importantly, he had even said it out loud, seemingly without the slightest shred of remorse at all...

Zhang Shi, aren't you afraid of the predecessors killing you on the spot for your insolence?

Even if you don't wish to be recognized and become the principal, you need not bring such trouble upon yourself, right?

On the other hand, Zhao Bingxu nearly fell off the stage after hearing Zhang Xuan's words.

School Head Mo and the others also nearly had their lower jaws falling to the ground. Their faces flushed incredibly red, seemingly ready to blow at any moment.

"You want to pummel us?"

While the crowd was feeling light-headed from this abrupt turn of events, the wills of the preceding predecessors on the stage stared at one another in frenzy, unable to believe what they had just heard as well.

As preceding principals of the Master Teacher Academy, they had undergone this formality themselves, and they had assessed many juniors after them too. They had seen those who wracked their brains to formulate the perfect three sentences to present to them, but never had they seen one who threatened to pummel them on this formal occasion.

You must be on the verge of going insane!

As the faces of all of the preceding principals darkened, Founder Mu Kai frowned and advised, "You only have three sentences, consider what you wish to say carefully!"

"I have already considered it thoroughly, just allow me to pummel all of you once!" Zhang Xuan replied affirmatively.

After which, his figure blurred, and in the next instant, he was already standing before Founder Mu Kai with his palm raised, ready to assault the latter.

Hong long!

The palm strike was so powerful that it caused a deafening sonic boom to reverberate in the air. With just one glance, Founder Mu Kai could instantaneously tell that the young man before him possessed exceptional strength. Even a Half-Saint could be easily killed by the palm strike.

"Zhang shi really made a move?"

"What is he up to?"

"Doomed, he is really doomed now. To make a move on the founder of the academy is a grossly disrespectful act; he will never be able to earn their recognition anymore!"

...

The master teachers beneath the stage clutched their hair in frenzy. Zhao Bingxu, School Head Mo, and the others could feel their hearts in their mouths, and they felt as if they were going to faint at any moment soon.

To make a move on one's predecessor, that was no longer a problem as simple as whether he was willing to become the principal or not anymore. Once this matter reached the ears of the Master Teacher Pavilion, he could be severely punished for his disrespectful actions!

In the worst-case scenario, he might even be scorned by all, making it impossible for him to remain a master teacher!

"Audacious!"

"How brazen!"

"You are seeking death!"

...

Seeing Zhang Xuan make a move on Founder Mu Kai, the other preceding principals immediately bellowed furiously.

Founder Mu Kai's face also twitched at Zhang Xuan's abrupt assault, and he quickly dodged his attack with a side step before raising his palm to retaliate with a strike of his own. In response, Zhang Xuan swiftly turned around and retreated.

Founder Mu Kai was planning to retaliate, but in that moment, he abruptly sensed something that left his eyes narrowed and his body trembling.

Hu!

Seeing that the other party had finally understood it, Zhang Xuan smiled and came to a halt.

However, his halt didn't stop the preceding principals from charging at him furiously. Powerful surges of energy, reminiscent of steel, were heading swiftly for him to bound him tightly.

Zhang Xuan's disrespect toward the founder of the Master Teacher Academy had incurred their ire, and their anger would never be appeased until they taught the new principal a harsh lesson.

"Stop!"

But just as the steel-like surges of energy were about to bind Zhang Xuan tightly together, a loud bellow abruptly sounded—Founder Mu Kai.

All of the preceding principals hesitated for a moment before withdrawing their strength and returning back to their positions reluctantly. Nevertheless, their hostile gazes were still fixated upon Zhang Xuan.

"Mu shi, this new principal has no respect for his seniors and the rules of the Master Teacher Pavilion at all. To dare make a move against you, that clearly shows that there is a problem with his character! Please, allow us to deal with him!"

"We, master teachers, have always valued etiquette, and if we don't deal with him, how are we to maintain discipline among our ranks?"

The preceding principals all exclaimed furiously.

In their years as principals, they had never seen a person as brazen as that.

"Audacious!" Hearing the furious exclamations from the crowd, Founder Mu Kai's face turned livid, and he raged, "We are only a sliver of will left behind by our former selves, and yet you still wish to teach the incumbent principal a lesson? Don't you think that is overstepping your bounds?"

Hearing Mu shi, the one who respected etiquette strictly the most among them, saying such words, everyone was dumbstruck. They couldn't help but stare at him in confusion.

I didn't see you hesitating in the slightest when you made a move on him earlier!

It's just that the other party managed to dodge your attack, so your strike failed to land on him... We are just doing the same as you; why are our actions considered 'overstepping our bounds'?

"What should do we do then?" one of the preceding principals asked.

"What else do you plan to do..." Founder Mu Kai glared at the preceding principal who had asked the question and raised his hands majestically. "Remain rooted on the spot and allow him to pummel you!"

Putong! Putong! Putong!

The knees of the master teachers beneath the stage caved in, and they all fell to the ground.

Remain rooted on the spot and allow Zhang shi to pummel them... What the heck was with that?

Was that some kind of bad joke from the founder of the Master Teacher Academy?

The wills of the preceding principals exchanged horrified glances with one another.

This was especially so for the second and third generation principals. Not only had they lived in the same era as Founder Mu Kai, they were even his student and grandstudent respectively. As such, they had a deep understanding of Founder Mu Kai's personality.

Upright and austere, he was a person who viewed etiquette with great importance. Yet, for him to show no signs of anger in face of the rudeness of the new principal, and even command them to remain still before the latter's beating...

Such a response was inconceivable!

"Enough, hurry up and do as I say. Our time out here is limited, so stop wasting it!"

Paying no heed to the shock of the others, Founder Mu Kai waved his hands impatiently.

"Yes!" In face of Founder Mu Kai's displeasure, the preceding principals could only grit their teeth and step forward reluctantly. With a look reminiscent of soldiers marching to their deaths, they glared at Zhang Xuan and said in resignation, "Come, do your worst!"

"Pardon me!" Nodding, Zhang Xuan stepped forward and shrouded all of the preceding principals with his zhenqi in an instant.

The zhenqi only remained for a brief instant before dissipating. After which, Zhang Xuan returned back to the edge of the stage and stood quietly, as if nothing had happened at all.

On the other hand, the faces of the preceding principals paled as realization struck them. They turned their sights to the young principal once more, this time with their gazes filled with respect.

With a soft chuckle, Founder Mu Kai said, "Alright, it's about time. Let's begin!"

"I, the first-generation principal of the Master Teacher Academy, declare my recognition for Zhang shi as the next principal. With him, the Master Teacher Academy will definitely be brought to unprecedented heights!"

"I, the second-generation principal of the Master Teacher Academy, declare my recognition for Zhang shi as the next principal!"

"I, the third-generation principal of the Master Teacher Academy, declare my recognition for Zhang shi as the next principal!"

"I, the fourth-generation principal of the Master Teacher Academy, declare my recognition for Zhang shi as the next principal!"

"I..."

...

"I, the 102nd generation principal of the Master Teacher Academy, declare my recognition for Zhang shi as the next principal!"

One by one, the principal of each generation stepped forward and declared their own support for Zhang Xuan as the next principal of the Master Teacher Academy with a resounding voice.

"Am I seeing things? The preceding principals actually expressed their support for Zhang shi?"

"I have no idea what is going on!"

"Didn't Zhang shi just show blatant disrespect for the founder of the Master Teacher Academy? Under such circumstances, shouldn't all of the preceding principals object to his inauguration? How did the situation suddenly turn to this?"

"I have no idea either... In any case, Zhang shi isn't a person who can be defined by common sense. Somehow, even the impossible becomes possible when he is involved..."

The master teachers beneath the stage were shocked beyond words.

Of the hundred principals in history, the only one to have received the highest authority was the founder, Mu Kai. Yet, despite crossing the wills of all of the preceding principals, that fellow had actually been recognized by each and every one of them and received the Supreme Jurisdiction over the academy without the slightest doubt...

Could it be that the wills of these preceding principals were actually masochists who preferred to be beaten up than to listen to words?

"Since we are done expressing our recognition for Zhang shi, it's about time for us to leave." Seeing that everything was done, Founder Mu Kai nodded before he turned to Zhang Xuan once more and said, "I hope that you will never forget your roots as the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, no matter how high you reach in the future."

After which, he clasped his fist and said, "Farewell!"

With those words, the figures of the preceding principals swiftly blurred before disappearing altogether. Most likely, they had been teleported away by the formation.

"Hu..." With their departure, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but heave a long sigh of relief.

Upon learning that he would have to obtain the Supreme Jurisdiction in order to access all of the books in the academy, he couldn't help but want to obtain it.

After a long moment of contemplation, he had come to understand that it was impossible for him to win the support of over 80% of the preceding principals with just three sentences, especially given his disadvantages, such as his lacking cultivation and low master teacher rank.

Unless... he could find a compelling reason that would leave them with no choice but to recognize him!

Such a reason would be nigh impossible for anyone to find, but it just so happened that he had one!

Celestial Master Teacher!

As a master teacher recognized by even the heavens, who would not recognize him?

However, his capability was still currently too low in order to manipulate his power such that it was only visible to the preceding principals. Considering that they were in a public location, he could potentially be placed into danger in the future if his identity as a Celestial Master Teacher were to become known by others.

Left with no choice, he could only come up with an alternative plan... Feigning to battle with the master teachers to shroud his zhenqi around them before releasing his pressure as a Celestial Master Teacher!

It was a little troublesome, but his Heaven's Path zhenqi would be able to hinder anyone from trying to look into what was happening within.

And after revealing his identity... which preceding principal would still dare to object to him?

No matter how powerful one was, could one possibly be stronger than the heavens?

Celestial Master Teacher, the height that no one other than Kong shi had reached!

As such, the previous sight had occurred, and Zhang Xuan became the only principal since the founding of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy to have received the recognition of every single preceding principal!

It was inconvenient for the preceding principals to speak of this matter, so the others had no idea what had happened either. As such, the mysterious veil that seemed to shroud Zhang Xuan grew even thicker.

The students and teachers who had harbored doubts regarding Zhang Xuan's inauguration as the principal were also utterly silenced by this matter.

A man who was recognized by all of the preceding principals, what right did they have to doubt his capability?

Recovering from his shock, Zhao Bingxu scanned the surroundings and declared with a hoarse voice, "Alright, since Zhang shi has received the recognition of all of the preceding principals, let's move on to the next formality—forming the Principal's Seal!

"But before that, allow me to invite Principal Zhang to conduct a public lecture!"

Chapter 902

Even Donkeys Have Gone Insane!

Forming the Principal's Seal required gathering the wills of every single student and teacher in the Master Teacher Academy. It was a solemn and sacred event.

Before doing so, the succeeding principal was required to conduct a public lecture so as to give the members of the academy a glimpse of his capability in imparting knowledge. If the succeeding principal couldn't even convince the members of the academy of his capability, how could he possibly gather their wills to form the Principal's Seal?

"I am excited to hear Zhang shi's lecture!"

"Since even his students are so capable, little has to be said about the teacher!"

"I wonder what the lecture from a man recognized by all of the preceding principals will be like..."

Anticipation surfaced on the faces of the crowd.

Given how even Zhang shi's students could lecture about the foundation of cultivation and battle techniques so well, he should be able to do far better than that!

"I shall conduct a lecture on the fundamentals then!" Zhang Xuan nodded as he walked toward the edge of the stage.

School Head Mo had told him earlier that he would have to hold a public lecture as part of the inauguration ceremony, so there was nothing much for him to hesitate over.

Besides, having comprehended the Heart of a Teacher, he had a deeper insight into the responsibilities of a teacher. Knowledge served as a tool to further the prosperity of mankind, and only through imparting it would they serve their purpose. There was no point in him keeping it to himself.

After surveying the crowd, Zhang Xuan began to speak.

"One can view cultivation as similar to building a castle. Only with a strong foundation can a castle reach great heights. Otherwise, it will only be like the moon in the lake, disappearing with the slightest ripple..."

Even though he didn't intentionally amplify his voice, his words still reached the ears of every single person in the training grounds crisp clear.

As he spoke, spiritual energy began to surge in from the heavens and gathered around the training grounds. The sheer concentration of spiritual energy resulted in its materialization as innumerable pure white lotuses, creating an exceptionally beautiful sight.

Spirit Gathering Diction!

Listening to Zhang Xuan's lecture, it didn't take long for the students to fall into a trance.

...

On the streets beyond the Master Teacher Academy were stores trading in every sort of commodity that one could think of, be it daily necessities, accommodation, or consumables. Over the years, each store had developed an extremely effective supply chain that drove the economy of Hongyuan Empire.

Being a master teacher was one of the most lucrative occupations in the Master Teacher Continent, so those who succeeded in securing a store around the Master Teacher Academy often made a killing out of their businesses.

"Boss, isn't the main reason most choose a store location close to the Master Teacher Academy to come into contact more with master teachers and possibly receive their guidance and advance their cultivation? Why has your cultivation remained stagnant over the past twenty years then?"

In a tavern, a carefree swordsman with a cup of fine wine in his hand gazed lazily at another person standing not too far away from him.

He had visited the tavern once twenty years ago and lived there for several months. In that period of time, the both of them had grown rather close with one another.

The man who he was speaking to was a potbellied man in his fifties, with an

appearance that deeply resembled a merchant. However, he was actually a renowned swordsman, boasting incredible skill dozens of years ago!

However, for some reason, he had backed out of the pugilistic world and became the owner of a tavern instead. It had been dozens of years since then, and many merchants along the street had come and gone; he was the only one who had remained constant in this time, and his cultivation had shown no change as well.

As such, the swordsman couldn't help but be bewildered by this puzzling sight.

"I also wish to advance my cultivation, and there must have been at least eight thousand master teachers who have drunk in my tavern, and of which, probably two to three thousand have offered me pointers on my cultivation at some point. However... it seems like I have already reached the limits of my talent. No matter how hard I try, I am just unable to take another step forward!"

Sighing deeply, the boss shook his head with a bitter smile.

As a swordsman who had lived alongside his sword for many years, he wouldn't have chosen to cast aside his sword had he not met with overwhelming difficulties.

Severely damaged in a fight against a rival, he had found his cultivation and his ability to cultivate crippled. Hoping to find a cure, he had opened this tavern just outside the Master Teacher Academy so that he could seek their advice and return to his peak...

However, dozens of years had passed, and he had indeed encountered many master teachers as well. However, not a single one of them possessed the capability to cure his trauma and allow him to pick up the sword once more!

Over time, disappointment after disappointment had eroded the confidence he had, and eventually, his skill with the sword became beneath his skill with a butcher's cleaver.

"Sigh!"

Realizing the boss's helplessness toward his plight, the carefree swordsman gulped down large mouthfuls of wine and sighed. Just as he was about to say something in consolation, he suddenly felt the surrounding spiritual energy gushing furiously toward the Master Teacher Academy.

"What is happening?" the swordsman asked with a deep frown.

The boss took a glance and replied nonchalantly, "I heard that the Master Teacher Academy is holding an inauguration ceremony for their succeeding principal today. Most likely, they are currently in the public lecture formality at the moment. For a 6-star master teacher to trigger Spirit Gathering Diction, that isn't anything to make a fuss about..."

A 5-star master teacher was already capable of utilizing Spirit Gathering Diction, just that the area of effect would be significantly smaller.

Considering that the one conducting the lecture was the succeeding principal, it should come as no surprise that he was capable of utilizing Spirit Gathering Diction.

"Oh..." The swordsman nodded. However, just as he was about to continue drinking, he suddenly heard a voice from afar. "One can view cultivation as similar to building a castle. Only with a strong foundation can a castle reach great heights..."

The voice seemed to gradually fade off from the boundary of the Master Teacher Academy, but as the tavern was located right against the academy's walls, it was a little vague but still barely audible in there.

"This... the content may seem basic, but it is very direct, seemingly pointing straight to the essence of cultivation!" After listening for a brief moment, the carefree swordsman's eyes suddenly brightened, and he placed his wine cup down. The zhenqi in his body began to move spontaneously according to the other party's words, furthering his cultivation.

"Incredible!"

For his body to have such a reaction despite being such a distance away from the speaker, just how powerful was the person lecturing in the Master Teacher Academy at this very moment?

This was no longer a simple lecture but an impartation of the true essence of the world!

Taking a swift glance at the boss of the tavern and seeing that the latter was still in the midst of preparing his wine, the carefree swordsman quickly yelled, "Boss, you should listen to the lecture, too!"

The trauma the latter's body had suffered had hindered him from cultivating. Perhaps, the formidable might of this lecture would be able to aid him in overcoming his trauma and bring him back to his peak!

"Listen to what? It's not like I haven't met the elders of the Master Teacher Academy before. I have already received personal guidance from a couple of them, but none of them were able to do anything about my situation! What use can a mere public lecture be?" The boss shook his head, thinking nothing of it.

Since even the personal guidance of the elders of the Master Teacher Academy was unable to treat him, what could a public lecture possibly do for him?

After so many years of disappointment, the hope he had harbored initially had already eroded, leaving nothing but disappointment and despair.

His faith in master teachers had also fallen to a minimum as a result.

On the other hand, seeing that the boss of the tavern was reluctant to budge, the carefree swordsman urged anxiously, "I am not joking, you really should give it a listen. This is really good stuff..."

Wandering the world, he had encountered many master teachers and listened to many of their lessons, but there were none who could compare with this public lecture. Or perhaps, it might be more accurate to say that they were on two totally different levels!

Despite the faint voice depriving him of a few words here and there, he still benefited greatly from the lecture.

"It's fine, I have already gotten used to this life!" The boss shook his head with a smile as he continued to prepare his wine behind the counter, not bothering to make his way over.

"You don't believe me? Take a look at that donkey then!"

Seeing that the boss was reluctant to come over, the carefree swordsman shook his head helplessly, unsure of how he should convince the boss otherwise when he suddenly caught sight of something, and his eyes widened in shock. He hurriedly raised his finger and pointed at a donkey in the courtyard of the tavern.

It was the animal that the boss used to transport his wine about.

"Donkey?" Frowning, the boss shot a gaze over, and the sight before him left him stunned.

The donkey, which he had spent several years with, had pricked up its large ears and placed one against the wall of the academy, listening intently so as to not miss a single word of the lecture. Under the effects of the lecture, it seemed to have fallen into a trance, snorting in excitement from time and time while nodding continuously to express his respect for the lecturer.

"Even a donkey is listening to the lecture?" The boss narrowed his eyes in shock.

It was said that the most formidable of master teachers were able to impart knowledge beyond racial boundaries. Be they human or beast, the master teacher would be able to draw them in with their lecture, convincing their bodies to cultivate obediently.

However, those who had managed to achieve such heights were extremely rare. At the very least, despite managing a tavern right outside the Master Teacher Academy for so many years, he had never seen a master teacher capable of such.

For the public lecture of the succeeding principal to successfully convince even a donkey to listen to his words... Just what in the world was being said?

In that moment of bewilderment, the boss suddenly saw his perfectly ordinary donkey raising its head to the air and braying out loud. The aura it emanated from its presence intensified as spiritual energy gushed into its body, nurturing its strength.

Kacha! Kacha!

The donkey had successfully achieved a breakthrough from an ordinary animal into a savage beast!

Aoooooooo, aooooo!

With this breakthrough, the donkey brayed arrogantly as it turned its sight to its boss tauntingly.

Courage that had long disappeared within the donkey after the many years of oppression finally bloomed within it once more, and the determination to use its donkey hooves to fight against the inequality in its fate permeated its being.

"Since even a donkey is capable of achieving a breakthrough, don't you think that it's still too early for you to give up? Surely you can't be inferior to even a donkey, right?" the carefree swordsman remarked.

The boss's face turned pale.

The donkey that he had bought was only an ordinary animal, possessing no bloodline of any savage beast whatsoever. Yet, just by listening to a lecture momentarily, it actually managed to achieve a breakthrough... Just how formidable was the lecturer?

Perhaps, if he were to listen to it, he might just be able to overcome the bottleneck that had limited his progress...

Just as he was about to approach the wall against the Master Teacher Academy to listen to the lecture, he suddenly saw a rooster, which he was intending to kill later in the night for dinner, leaping out of its cage, spreading its wings, and soaring into the boundless skies, reminiscent of a proud phoenix!

An ordinary rooster had also become a savage beast after listening to the lecture!

Following which, the pig he had bred, the fish within the pail... Changes began to emerge in each of them as strength welled up within them, and they began to thrash about in hopes of escaping the courtyard, as well as the desolate fate that was awaiting them...

"Th-this..." The boss rubbed his eyes in disbelief.

Just what in the world was the succeeding principal lecturing on for such changes to emerge in all of these fellows?

Gugu huahua!

But before he could recover from the shock of it, he suddenly heard many beasts and animals along the streets calling out delightfully as their strength reached new heights. At the same time, many vendors who were listening to the public lecture also felt invigorated as they overcame their previous bottlenecks.

In just a short moment, the street seemed to have become completely different from before.

"I must hurry... I have to listen to the lecture as well..." Knowing that this change was caused by the lecture occurring within the academy, the boss dared not to hesitate anymore. He quickly ran over and placed his ears against the academy walls, intent on listening to what was being said within.

And with just a couple of words, his eyes immediately glazed over as he fell into a trance.

Hong long!

Some time later, his cultivation, which had remained stagnated for dozens of years, abruptly began moving once more, and with a resounding buzz, he overcame the locks tying him down previously.

"I have succeeded!"

Realizing that he could finally pick up a sword once more, the boss's body trembled in agitation. He had no idea who the lecturer was, but he still kneeled down toward the Master Teacher Academy to express his earnest gratitude for a very long time.

...

The same sight was also occurring along all of the streets in proximity to the Master Teacher Academy.

At least nine out of ten of those who had reached a certain level in their cultivation would receive a tangible benefit from listening to the lecture or even achieve a breakthrough!

However, what was even more exaggerated was the animals. Almost all of them had turned into savage beasts just by listening to the lecture!

In the royal palace, a white-haired historian recorded the events.

Hongyuan Empire, the 33th Year of Emperor Yu Shenqing's rule, spring.

In the inauguration ceremony of the 104th principal of the Master Teacher Academy, Zhang shi held a public lecture. Spiritual energy descended from the heavens, and heavenly lotuses were scattered in the sky. All members of the Xuanxuan Faction achieved a breakthrough simultaneously, and many other students had managed to

advance their cultivation significantly as well.

In order to listen to the lecture, all of the savage beasts and spirit beasts pressed their ears against the walls of the Master Teacher Academy. During that time, there was not a single animal to be found along the streets and alleys of Hongyuan City, but their calls echoed resoundingly throughout the entire city...

Chapter 903

Forming the Principal's Seal

"Alright, I will end the lecture here!"

The public lecture had lasted for an entire two hours, and after seeing that most students and teachers had benefited greatly from it, Zhang Xuan came to a stop.

"It's ending just like that?"

"In the past, when I attended the lecture of other teachers, I would be praying to get out of class as soon as possible. But for Zhang Shi's lecture... Why does it feel like it has only just begun?"

"Indeed, it ended too quickly! I have barely gotten started..."

"If I could listen to this kind of lecture frequently, my chances at making a breakthrough to Saint realm would surely be increased by manyfold, and the duration I would take to graduate would also be cut by several years..."

...

As Zhang Xuan came to a halt, the crowd recovered from their trance, and excitement gleamed in their eyes.

It was only a two hours lecture, but it was comparable to months or even years of studying and cultivating!

"Look!"

Suddenly, someone amid the crowd exclaimed, and everyone swiftly raised their gazes, only to see a bunch of animals flying above them.

There were chickens, ducks, geese, peacocks, cranes...

It was as if the Master Teacher Academy had turned into a zoo! All animals capable of

flight filled the entire skies.

"Laudation of Myriad Birds... Have they all arrived due to the sheer quality of the lecture?" someone among the crowd muttered with a quivering voice.

Laudation of Myriad Birds was a phenomenon that was at a far higher level than Spirit Gathering Diction! Only 8-star master teachers were capable of producing such a sight!

With mere words, even the birds in the area would go into an excited frenzy and gather in the area.

But Zhang shi was only a 4-star master teacher, how could he draw so many birds over?

Furthermore... chickens, ducks, geese, and peacocks? What the hell were those?

Were those animals capable of steady flight like that?

How could they remain in the sky for such a long period of time?

Furthermore, the calls of innumerable other animals could be heard beyond the walls of the Master Teacher Academy as well. One particularly conspicuous sound among it was the majestic braying of a donkey, seemingly trying to display to the world that it harbored great potential within as well. In the hands of a discerning man, it could transform into a Thousand Miles Donkey, so by no means should its talents be allowed to remain buried...

Just what was going on?

"Your guess is right; it was indeed Zhang shi's lecture that drew so many animals here. Furthermore, it seems his lecture didn't discriminate between races, allowing even non-human listeners to comprehend it and go into a frenzy over it... Perhaps, this is the real reason he was able to tame the spirit beasts and saint beasts of the Cloudmist Ridge!" an elder said meaningfully.

He had paid careful attention to the lecture, and he noticed that it seemed to talk straight to one's soul, unimpeded by the barriers of language. Even ordinary animals that had not comprehended the human tongue could benefit from Zhang shi's lecture!

Such capability was already far beyond the means of a 6-star or even 7-star master teacher!

The heavens nourished all living beings, regardless of race or language. Such was the same for the true Impartation of Heaven's Will as well.

Back then, when Kong shi conducted lectures, not only would humans, animals, spirit beasts, and saint beasts benefit greatly from his teachings, even the flora and fauna would form sentience and begin to cultivate.

While Zhang shi still didn't wield the capability to sway plants with his words, just the ability to induce a breakthrough in ordinary animals was already an extremely fearsome feat in itself.

"It seems like Principal Zhang will be able to clear the Empire Building test easily..." School Head Mo muttered beneath his breath as he gulped down a mouthful of saliva.

The Empire Building test was the most difficult option among all of the different 6-star master teacher examinations, and barely any master teachers would dare to challenge it. He had thought that even someone as capable as Principal Zhang would face troubles with it, but after watching such a sight, he realized that he was still grossly underestimating the latter.

Putting everything else aside, with just Principal Zhang's lecturing capability, he should be able to raise the prowess of a Conferred Kingdom to an Unranked Empire just by conducting a lecture once a week for two months straight...

With such a lecture, not only would the humans become experts, even the roosters, ducks, donkeys, and such could easily become experts themselves with time!

This was how fearsome his lecture was!

Looking at the crowd, which was still immersed in the lecture, Zhao Bingxu shook his head and announced loudly, "With this, we conclude the Principal Zhang's public lecture. Now, let's begin forming the Principal's Seal!"

They were already at the final formality, so it would be good to wrap up the inauguration ceremony as soon as possible in case any mishap occurred.

"The process for forming the Principal's Seal is extremely simple. I will activate a

formation later on, and those who are willing to earnestly recognize Principal Zhang as the next principal of the Master Teacher Academy, offer a droplet of your blood. Once the blood comes into contact with the formation, it will automatically extract your will contained within it and gather them all together to form the seal that governs the academy," Zhao Bingxu explained.

Infused within a human's blood was a hint of their will. With the earnest will of a hundred thousand people gathered together, it could generate power beyond one's imagination.

For one, if the principal could command all of the students through the Principal's Seal and organize them neatly, the overall fighting power of the Master Teacher Academy could be enhanced significantly.

On top of that, the Principal's Seal contained the will of countless master teachers, making it a nigh indestructible artifact. When used for defense, even a Saint realm 4-dan or even 5-dan expert would find it hard to overcome it.

In essence, it could be said that the Principal's Seal represented the authority of the principal of the Master Teacher Academy in itself, making in an invaluable artifact.

"We will start now!" After explaining the matter, Zhao Bingxu raised his palm and closed it into a fist.

Hong long!

The ground began to shake as a massive formation whirred into life. Something reminiscent of a net of light materialized in the air, shrouding the Master Teacher Academy.

Grade-7 formation, Nine Revolution Heaven Net!

The master teachers from the headquarters had dispatched their men to erect this formation back when the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy was just founded.

It was neither an offensive formation nor a defensive formation. Its sole purpose lay in just gathering the wills infused in the blood of those in its area and condensing them all to form the palm-size Principal's Seal.

"Gather the blood!"

Seeing the formation whirl into action, the master teachers bit their thumbs, and a droplet of their blood essence flew out of each of them.

When each of these droplets of blood essence came into contact with the Nine Revolution Heaven Net, it began to emanate a brilliant glow.

"Form the Principal's Seal!" Zhao Bingxu shouted once more after noting that everyone had released a droplet of their blood.

Hong long long!

The net in the sky suddenly converged together swiftly, gathering all of the droplets of blood essence together to a point. A deafening buzz rang out as a brilliant bundle of light shimmered at the center of the formation, seemingly heralding the birth of an artifact.

As he looked at the brilliant bundle of light in the sky, School Head Mo couldn't help but ask, "What level of Principal's Seal do you think our principal will be able to form?"

Even though everyone had released a droplet of their blood, it was impossible to tell whether they had truly accepted Principal Zhang from the depths of their heart or not.

In order to contribute to the Principal's Seal, one's subconscious mind must have fully accepted the succeeding principal, there mustn't be the slightest hint of rejection.

Jiang Qingqin hesitated for a moment before replying. "It's hard to say... However, considering how well the public lecture went, he should be able to form the Golden Principal's Seal at the very least!"

Before the Principal's Seal was formed, it would be difficult to say for sure.

As the saying goes, 'one's true heart is hidden beneath a layer of skin'. Even as 6-star pinnacle master teachers, it was still impossible for them to read the minds of others.

Nevertheless, considering how Principal Zhang had managed to draw everyone in with his lecture previously, he should have at least won the recognition of over 60% of the school populace... In other words, even at the very least, he should be able to form the Golden Principal's Seal!

By no means should the Golden Principal's Seal be underestimated. Even among the

hundred preceding principals, such a result could already be considered outstanding.

Ultimately, Principal Zhang was still young, and it had only been a month since he had arrived at the Master Teacher Academy. On top of that, he had spent most of his time demolishing buildings!

If he had been given more time to conduct more lectures and build his reputation and prestige, forming a higher tier Principal's Seal would have been a walk in the park!

"I think the Platinum Principal's Seal is still within reach!" School Head Mo remarked. "Even though there have only been two principals who have reached such a tier since the founding of the academy, considering that this is Principal Zhang we are talking about... it should definitely be doable!"

The Principal's Seal could be divided into four tiers—Platinum, Golden, Copper, and Iron.

It would take the recognition of at least half of the academy's populace in order to form a Copper Principal's Seal, 60% for Golden Principal's Seal, and 70% for Platinum Principal's Seal.

"Platinum? I think you are still underestimating Principal Zhang!" Wei Ranxue argued with a sharp glint in her eyes. "Before even entering the Master Teacher Academy, Principal Zhang generously gave away his points to the other examinees so that they could clear the examination as well, thus winning him the respect and admiration of the thirty thousand freshmen. It is their shared respect for him that led to them coming together to form the Xuanxuan Faction. With this, he already has the support of 30% of the academy's hundred thousand populace secured!"

"Un!" The other school heads nodded in agreement.

The Xuanxuan Faction was not only the largest student faction throughout the Master Teacher Academy, its members were also known to be exceptionally loyal to the organization.

Considering that it was their faction leader that was becoming the principal, they probably wouldn't have any objection to it whatsoever.

"After which, he donated Elder Wu Yangzi's forging and body cultivation technique to the Blacksmith school without demanding any compensation in return. For this, the

students of the Blacksmith School should be filled with gratitude for him, right?"

"This..." Jiang Qingqin and School Head Mo were stunned for a moment before nodding in agreement.

Even though School Head Zhao and the other elders of the Blacksmith School didn't officially announce Zhang Xuan's achievements, the news had eventually been leaked to the students, so most of them were aware of the matter.

"As the second largest school in the Master Teacher Academy, even after subtracting the freshmen, there are still at least thirty thousand students in the Blacksmith School... In other words, there are already a total of 60,000 people who would recognize Principal Zhang, so he has already reached the mark required to form the Golden Principal's Seal!

"After which, he challenged the vice head of the Physician School, You Xu, causing a huge ruckus. Even though there are quite a few students who found his actions reckless and disrespectful, a larger proportion of the students ended up admiring him for his courageous act in standing up against You Xu's abuse of power. The Physician School is only the fifth largest school in the Master Teacher Academy, and taking into account the overlap in the students between the Physician School and the Blacksmith School as well... there should still be an additional five thousand students there!"

The students of the Master Teacher Academy were allowed to take on multiple supporting occupations at once, so there were frequently overlaps between the students of each school.

But even taking the overlaps into consideration, there should still be at least five thousand new students who hadn't been taken into account previously, thus adding up the total to 65,000 students!

"Following that, he caused a huge ruckus in the Apothecary School, conducting a public lecture and emptying the school of its students and teachers... As the largest school in the Master Teacher Academy, it boasted the largest student population of all! Even taking into account the various overlaps, there should still be ten thousand new students yet to be taken into account there. This brings the total to 75,000 people, which means that 75% of the student populace will likely recognize Principal Zhang as their principal, thus reaching the level required to form the Platinum Principal's Seal," Wei Ranxue said.

"This..." Hearing her analysis, the school heads couldn't help but leap in shock.

It was only after having it explained to them that they realize how much prestige Principal Zhang wielded among the academy populace despite the short duration he had been in the academy...

"That isn't all... In the matter yesterday, Zhang Xuan's act of taming all of the beasts in the Cloudmist Ridge saved many students from the Beast Tamer School and spared the students from the Martial Arts School from a possibly bitter fight!"

With eyes shining in excitement, Wei Ranxue continued, "Taking them into account, there should be at least an additional five thousand students... In other words, using a conservative estimate, Principal Zhang should have at least won the earnest respect of more than 80% of the academy populace!"

"80%?"

School Head Mo and the others glanced at one another as they gulped down a mouthful of saliva each. Hoarsely, School Head Mo muttered, "That... Supreme Principal's Seal?"

Chapter 904

From Today Onward, I Am the Principal!

Hong long!

Shortly after saying those words, the brilliant light at the center of the Nine Revolution Heaven Net finally started to dim, and a shining diamond-like Principal's Seal emerged before everyone's eyes.

This Principal's Seal had a translucent appearance reminiscent of a beautiful diamond, and its appearance left everyone's hearts jolting in astonishment.

School Head Mo and School Head Jiang's bodies trembled once more, and with a hoarse voice tinged with the disbelief over what they were seeing, they muttered, "No... That isn't the Supreme Principal's Seal, but the... Impeccable Principal's Seal!"

"Isn't the Impeccable Principal's Seal a thing of legends? How could it possibly appear here?"

The Principal's Seal that had formed before their eyes wasn't the Supreme Principal's Seal, which required at least the earnest recognition from 80% of the academy populace, but the even higher tier Impeccable Principal's Seal!

In order to achieve this tier, one had to obtain the respect and admiration of every single student and teacher in the Master Teacher Academy!

Such a tier only existed in theory because it was deemed to be impossible to achieve. Even Founder Mu Kai himself had failed to form such a Principal's Seal!

Each person had their own beliefs and ideals, and the more people there were, the more difficult it would be to win all of their favor simultaneously. Unless one was a spirit stone, it would be impossible to win the favor of over a hundred thousand master teachers simultaneously.

After all, not even the great Kong shi was able to make everyone submit to him.

Yet, someone had actually achieved this seemingly impossible task, and right before their eyes at that!

Just how did this happen?

It had only been slightly more than a month since the other party enrolled in to the Master Teacher Academy, and on top of that, he had spent half of his time beyond the walls of the academy... This was truly inconceivable!

Hu!

Before everyone's shocked gazes, the Impeccable Principal's Seal fell toward Zhang Xuan and landed on his palm.

Taking hold of it, Zhang Xuan frowned in astonishment.

The Impeccable Principal's Seal was only around the size of one's palm, but in the moment that he caught the falling seal, he nearly fell off the stage from the sheer weight of the seal.

Taking his zhenqi, physical body, and soul cultivation into account, Zhang Xuan possessed a total might of 65,000,000 ding at the moment. With such strength, he could even easily lift a mountain!

As such, it was truly bewildering how the small Impeccable Principal's Seal would be so heavy that he would nearly fail to catch it.

Lowering his head to examine it closely, the seal in his hand had a translucency reminiscent of a diamond, emanating an extremely brilliant and beautiful glow.

Its appearance showed no signs of such heaviness, and on the contrary, it even gave the impression that it would be light and fleeting.

Curious, he immersed his consciousness into the Impeccable Principal's Seal, and what he saw left his eyes narrowing uncontrollably.

This is... the weight of responsibility! Zhang Xuan exclaimed internally before sighing deeply.

As an artifact forged out of wills, it should have been nearly weightless, to the point

that any child could carry it easily. However, it bore the trust and faith of more than a hundred thousand students and teachers of the Master Teacher Academy, and that wasn't a weight that anyone could bear easily.

It wasn't the Impeccable Principal's Seal that was heavy, but the responsibility that came along with it!

Zhang Xuan had only chosen to become the principal so that he could conveniently access all of the books within the Master Teacher Academy, but feeling the weight in his hands, he suddenly felt that he could not proceed on with such an attitude in mind.

Since he had decided to take on this responsibility, he would have to shoulder everyone's hopes and dreams and bring them to greater heights.

Otherwise, how could he face those who had placed their trust and faith into him?

Taking a deep breath, Zhang Xuan made a solemn vow under his breath. "Rest assured. As long as the Principal's Seal remains in my hands, I will definitely not let any of you down..."

This Principal's Seal was neither an honor nor a tool to elevate his standing; it represented the heavy responsibility on his shoulders!

The greater authority one wielded, the more responsibility one had to bear.

At this moment, Zhang Xuan could finally understand why the old principal insisted on heading to the ancient domain despite knowing the dangers behind it. Most likely, there must have been something extremely important within it that left him with no choice but to do so.

Hu!

Shortly after such thoughts emerged in his mind, the incredible weight that had threatened to break his already bent wrist abruptly disappeared, and the Impeccable Principal's Seal became as light as a feather.

Holding onto the Principal's Seal, Zhang Xuan turned his sight to the crowd beneath the stage once more.

The face of every single teacher and student appeared clearly before his eyes. There

was a warmth in their eyes that was reminiscent of one when meeting old acquaintances.

After a seemingly long period of silence, Zhang Xuan's voice abruptly boomed across the training grounds.

"From today onward, I am the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy!"

"Principal!"

"Principal!"

"Principal..."

Loud chanting exploded from the agitated crowd, and the voices continued for a very long time...

A position that had been empty for more than two years had finally found a new owner, and it was with the recognition and admiration of every single teacher and student in the academy at that!

"That is our principal..." School Head Mo and the others couldn't help but feel warm tears streaming down their cheeks.

Ever since the disappearance of the old principal, it had been necessary for the Ten Great Master Teachers to step up to handle his responsibilities among the skepticism and doubts of others, thus putting them under a lot of pressure.

However, with such an outstanding principal to lead them now, they would surely be able to raise the Master Teacher Academy to even greater heights than before.

...

At the same moment, on the Recording Platform of the Qingyuan Conferred Empire Master Teacher Pavilion, a single line of words appeared...

The 18,827th Year of the Qingyuan Calendar, Master Teacher Zhang Xuan takes over the position as the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy.

These words weren't particularly striking, and it didn't take long before it was

drowned among the other incoming information of the Recording Platform.

Only in the very distant future did the later generations realize the true significance behind those words, and the legend that would rise along with it...

...

With the inauguration ceremony finally coming to an end, Zhang Xuan stepped off to the stage and headed to the Principal's Residence prepared for him. However, before he could reach his destination, School Head Mo suddenly walked toward him and handed him a storage ring.

"Principal Zhang, these are the congratulatory gifts sent in by the nearby empires, powers, and Master Teacher Pavilions..."

The Master Teacher Pavilion was the central organization responsible for ensuring the peace and stability of the nearby dozen Tier-1 Empires and countless sects. Even if the leaders of most powers were unable to make it to the ceremony personally, the least they could do was deliver a proper congratulatory gift.

Grabbing the storage ring, Zhang Xuan immersed his consciousness into it to take a look, and his eyelids abruptly twitched in astonishment.

There were simply too many things inside, and each of them was of exceptional value!

Just in terms of the high-tier spirit stones, there were already several thousand of them. Other than that, there were also all kinds of valuable pills and precious artifacts.

"Place them into the treasury of the Master Teacher Pavilion. These items belong to the academy, not me..." Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan held back the urge to stuff the ring into his pocket and passed it back to School Head Mo.

He wanted to claim the storage ring for himself, but he knew that these congratulatory gifts weren't meant for him but his identity as the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy!

In other words, even if it was another person who had been inaugurated as the principal, they would also have received these gifts as well.

Thus, these gifts could be said to belong to the Master Teacher Academy and not to

him.

Besides, after accepting the gifts from the Cloudmist Ridge, these items no longer held much value to him.

"Yes!" School Head Mo nodded and took the storage ring back as the admiration in his gaze toward the young man before him deepened. Following which, he whipped out yet another storage ring and passed it over. "This is a personal gift from Emperor Yu Shenqing to you."

"To me?" Taken aback, Zhang Xuan took a look inside and blinked in surprise.

The items in the storage ring were significantly less valuable than the ones in the other, but it was still a significant sum. Yu Shenqing must have emptied out at least half of them national treasury in order to fork out this sum!

"Emperor Yu Shenqing has said this is his token of appreciation to you for saving the Bodhi Saint Tree and imparting the set of profound soul cultivation techniques to them, and he hopes that you won't turn down this gift of his!" School Head Mo said.

"This..." Zhang Xuan was a little hesitant.

The reason he saved the Bodhi Saint Tree was for Wei Ruyan's sake, and the impartation of the set of cultivation technique was his compensation for secretly learning the other party's secret arts... As such, how could he accept so many valuable items from the other party?

"Tell His Majesty that I appreciate his goodwill, but I am undeserving of his gift!" Zhang Xuan said with a wave of his hands.

The items were indeed good, but these were items that shouldn't belong to him in the first place.

If he were to accept them, he would be striking up a karmic debt with Yu Shenqing, and this was a burden he wasn't willing to bear.

"Alright then." School Head Mo nodded in response.

After dealing with a few other miscellaneous matters, Zhang Xuan said, "Now that's all settled, take me to the Mountain of Records. I wish to take the 6-star master teacher

examination!"

Since he had already become the principal of the Master Teacher Academy, it was about time for him to take the 6-star master teacher examination.

"Alright!" School Head Mo nodded before giving a rough introduction to the place. "The Mountain of Records is a ground used by the Master Teacher Academy to assess one's strength. Any master teacher of cultivation beneath Half-Saint is qualified to challenge it, and there are nine levels in total!"

"Nine levels?"

"Un. The difficulty of the test heightens significantly with each level. On the third floor, the challenger will have to face an enemy comparable to a Half-Saint cultivator; on the sixth floor, an enemy comparable to a Nascent Saint cultivator; and on the ninth floor... an enemy comparable to a Saint 1-dan cultivator!"

School Head Mo said, "This trial serves not only as a test but also as a standard for selecting combat masters. If any cultivator beneath the cultivation of Half-Saint clears the sixth level, they will gain the right to take the Combat Master Selection Test. If the cultivator successfully clears the ninth level, they will be able to join the Combat Master Hall immediately!"

"To reach the sixth level with a cultivation beneath Half-Saint... In other words, one has to defeat a Nascent Saint with the cultivation of Chrysalis realm pinnacle?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"Indeed. With the superior eye of discernment that master teachers possess, they wield power that can challenge cultivators with higher cultivation than them. Nevertheless, to defeat a Nascent Saint with the cultivation of Chrysalis realm pinnacle still requires an exceptional cultivation foundation and superior fighting prowess!" School Head Mo nodded grimly.

"Un." Zhang Xuan agreed.

The two master teachers that he had met back in the valley after procuring the Scarlet Firefly Fruits, Wu Xu and Lu Cheng, were very likely to be combat masters. Otherwise, the former wouldn't have been able to challenge the four strongest geniuses of the Master Teacher Academy simultaneously and still overwhelm them.

Zhang Xuan couldn't help but ask, "Throughout all these years, how many people have reached the sixth level with a cultivation beneath Half-Saint?"

School Head Mo pondered for a brief moment before replying, "In the ten thousand years since the establishment of the academy, a total of 327 people have successfully become a combat master. However, those who have done so through clearing the sixth level of the Mountain of Records are below a hundred!"

Those who were qualified to become combat masters were the master teachers who possessed fighting prowess unmatched by their peers. But even so, only a small proportion of them were able to rival a Nascent Saint with a cultivation beneath Half-Saint!

A huge rift existed between Sainthood and Transcendent Mortals. Before Saints, all beings were mere ants. Overcoming this gap was nigh impossible, even for geniuses.

"I see..." Zhang Xuan nodded as he continued asking, "What is the Master Teacher Academy's highest accomplishment in the Mountain of Records?"

Since there were challengers, there should be an existing record as well. Zhang Xuan was curious to learn the strength of the greatest genius of the Master Teacher Academy.

"The highest accomplishment was left behind by Principal Mo Liuzhen!" School Head Mo chuckled. "Principal Mo is known as the most capable genius of the Master Teacher Academy in the past ten millennia, and naturally, he still holds records to back this title as well. Back then, right after he achieved a breakthrough to Chrysalis realm, he headed to the Mountain of Records to challenge it, and in a single breath, he reached all the way up to the seventh level, leaving everyone else gasping in amazement!"

"Principal Mo managed to reach the seventh level right after reaching Chrysalis realm?" Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in shock.

His cultivation was currently at Chrysalis realm primary stage as well, the same cultivation realm that Mo Liuzhen was at when he challenged the Mountain of Records back then.

Considering the enemy at the ninth level was a Saint realm 1-dan primary stage cultivator, the enemy one would face on the seventh level would have to at least be a Nascent Saint intermediate stage or advanced stage cultivator.

In other words, given they were in the same cultivation realm, Principal Mo Liuzhen possessed fighting prowess comparable to or perhaps even beyond him!

Chapter 905

He Looked at Me

This was truly fearsome. The cultivation technique that Zhang Xuan cultivated was the strongest Heaven's Path Divine Art, and he had cultivated his physical body and soul as well. For Mo Liuzhen to possess strength equaling him, could it be that his soul and physical body were equally strong as well?

I truly mustn't underestimate other cultivators! Zhang Xuan thought in alarm.

In his journey from Tianxuan Kingdom, he had encountered many experts of his age, and he had always been able to overcome them easily. As time went by, a feeling of superiority had unwittingly arisen within him. However, it seemed like it was time to quell such a notion in his mind. There had always been powerful geniuses on par or even superior to him on the Master Teacher Continent, it was just that he had never met them before!

"Does Principal Zhang intend to challenge the record?" School Head Mo asked.

Honestly speaking, he was indeed rather curious to see the clash between the new principal and Principal Mo Liuzhen back then. With the same cultivation, which of them would possess superior fighting prowess?

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded, confirming School Head Mo's guess.

His strength was at 65,000,000 ding, which placed him on par with only a Nascent Saint intermediate stage cultivator, making it doubtful whether he could clear the seventh level or not. Nevertheless, this was a good opportunity to see how he stood against the top geniuses of the Master Teacher Continent, as well as to see what his limit was.

Besides, this was a necessary trial he would have to undertake if he wanted to clear the 6-star master teacher examination as soon as possible.

"Allow me to take you there!" School Head Mo's eyes lit up in excitement as he offered to lead the way to the Mountain of Records.

The Mountain of Records was in close proximity to the Elder Hall, and its structure was reminiscent of a towering mountain.

As the duo arrived at the Mountain of Records, School Head Mo began explaining more about the Mountain of Records. "Our Master Teacher Academy's Mountain of Records was built by Principal Mu Kai back then based on the Combat Master Tower in the Combat Master Hall. Every single level is guarded by a puppet that represents the pinnacle fighting prowess of a cultivator of that certain cultivation realm. It won't be easy to scale the Mountain of Records.

"This trial is extremely demanding on one's fighting prowess and battle sense. Furthermore, unlike most tests in the Master Teacher Academy, this trial is highly dangerous. Principal Zhang, you must proceed carefully inside!"

"Dangerous?"

"That's right. As the ones guarding the levels are puppets, they might be unable to control their strength as precisely as human cultivators. The slightest carelessness might easily place one in a lethal position, and each year, there are quite a number of master teachers who are severely injured or die in the trial!" School Head Mo said grimly.

The Mountain of Records wasn't an easy trial to challenge. Otherwise, it would have been impossible for it to have remained unchallenged despite it being more than a month since the start of the new semester.

"Principal Zhang, if you faces any danger in any level, please don't hesitate to admit defeat. Once you do so, the puppets will immediately stop their offense and back down," School Head Mo advised.

He had deep trust in Zhang Xuan's capability, but in the end, the latter's cultivation was still too low. There would definitely be levels where the latter would face grave danger, so it was important to explain the rules to him thoroughly in advance.

"Noted!" Zhang Xuan nodded before bidding School Head Mo farewell.

Without any hesitation, he began making his way into the Mountain of Records.

Before long, he arrived in a room roughly a few hundred square meters large. Within the room was a puppet that possessed the cultivation of Chrysalis realm advanced

stage, granting its fists an incredible might exceeding 30,000,000 ding.

"Finally, a new challenger! Hehehe!"

With a soft chuckle, the puppet's joints cracked resoundingly before pushing its massive feet against the ground and charging right toward Zhang Xuan.

An artifact by the Celestial Designer Hall? Even though it hasn't reached Saint-tier, it still possesses spirit. Not bad!

Knowing that the other party's strength was beneath his, Zhang Xuan wasn't nervous in the slightest. Standing before the rampaging might of the puppet's fist, he chuckled softly.

He had also encountered similar puppets in his 2-star master teacher examination back in Tianwu Kingdom, but it was obvious that the one before him was far more technologically advanced. Even though it was still a way off from becoming a Saint-tier artifact, it already possessed spirit and even sentience.

If one could forge many of such puppets, one would be able to build an extremely powerful army that felt no fear nor pain. However, considering the expensive materials and advanced skill required to build each one, that would probably be difficult to achieve.

Two breaths later, the puppet was already lying on the floor.

Zhang Xuan walked past it and headed to the second level without any hesitation.

The puppet on the second level possessed a cultivation of Chrysalis realm pinnacle. Naturally, it wasn't a match for him either, and he was able to defeat the other party easily.

Advancing ahead, just as School Head Mo had said, Zhang Xuan faced a Half-Saint primary stage puppet in the third level. However, considering how Zhang Xuan was able to defeat even a Half-Saint realm combat master like Lu Cheng shortly after achieving a breakthrough, there was no way his journey could be impeded by that Half-Saint primary stage puppet.

Heading up the levels, Zhang Xuan hardly faced any impediment at all.

...

At the bottom of the Mountain of Records, Zhao Bingxu, Wei Ranxue, and the others had also gathered in the area after hearing that Principal Zhang was going to challenge the trial.

They hadn't really witnessed Principal Zhang's battle prowess for themselves, but they knew that it was likely extraordinary, given the abilities of his direct disciples, Wang Ying, Zheng Yang, and Liu Yang.

How could a teacher who had the capability to groom such powerful students possibly be weak himself?

Wei Ranxue couldn't help but ask her fellow peers, "How far do you think that Principal Zhang will be able to reach?"

"I harbor little doubt regarding Principal Zhang's fighting prowess. Just by his comprehension of battle techniques, as well as his grasp of spearmanship, fist arts, and leg arts, he should be able to display a fighting prowess far beyond that of his cultivation realm. Back then, Principal Mo Liuzhen had reached the seventh level. I believe that, at the very least, Principal Zhang should be able to beat his record and reach the eighth!" the head of the Martial Arts School, Xu Changqing, said as he stroked his beard.

As a martial arts fanatic, he had taken some time to study Zheng Yang's spearmanship, Wang Ying's leg art, and Liu Yang's fist art, and the conclusion he had reached after a long examination was that... it would easily make them invincible among those of the same cultivation! There were no battle techniques that he could think of that could possibly rival theirs!

How could a master teacher who was able to impart such powerful battle techniques possibly be weak himself?

As talented as Principal Mo Liuzhen was, he also didn't manage to receive the recognition of all of the preceding principals and form the Impeccable Principal's Seal... For Principal Zhang to achieve this unprecedented feat, there was no way his accomplishment in the Mountain of Records would be beneath that of Principal Mo Liuzhen.

"Un. Just like you all, I also think that principal Zhang should be able to clear the eighth

level!" Zhao Bingxu said with a smile.

They had harbored doubts regarding Principal Zhang's capabilities in the past, and in the end, they had suffered severe face slaps due to their underestimation of the latter.

When they heard that the latter was going to challenge the Mountain of Records, they had rushed over excitedly, hoping to witness how the latter would break the record and leave behind a legend.

"I also think so..." School Head Jiang nodded in agreement. "I think it's just a question of how long it will take Teacher to reach the ninth level now..."

Others might be unaware of Principal Zhang's strength, but he had a clear view of it. Just in terms of comprehension of demonic tunes, the other party had already reached the level of a 7-star demonic tunist, just like him. With such prowess, the other party could easily destroy opponents of far higher cultivation realms than him.

Moreover, this was unlikely to be all of his means. If he were to utilize all of them, clearing the levels would definitely be just a walk in the park.

"Back then, Principal Mo Liuzhen took two hours in order to reach the seventh level. I think that our principal should be able to clear it within an hour!"

"An hour... I think that's still underestimating our principal. Considering his previous records, he should be able to clear the eighth within ten minutes and perhaps even destroy the entire Mountain of Records while he is in the midst of doing so..." the head of the Physician School, Zhong Dingchun, said with a bitter smile.

"That... Now that you mention it, that does seem to be possible!"

Hearing those words, everyone abruptly fell silent. They suddenly felt that it was a huge mistake for them to have allowed the other party to challenge the Mountain of Records.

Despite the short duration that Principal Zhang had been in the Master Teacher Academy, he had challenged quite a few of trials, and wherever he had passed through, there was not a single one that had been left intact. Devastating would be an apt term to describe it, and even they couldn't help but shudder when they imagine it.

The Mountain of Records was one of the more important heritages of the Master

Teacher Academy. If Principal Zhang were to collapse it as well... how could they possibly face their predecessors?

After a long moment of silence, the head of the Painter School, Song Danqing, said, "When he caused all that ruckus back then, he was only a student. Since he has become the principal... I guess he should know to hold back a little, right?"

"Let's hope that's the case..."

The others stared at the Mountain of Records with deep frowns on their faces, seemingly doubtful that Zhang Xuan would know to hold himself back.

The levels of the Mountain of Records were hidden amid the mountain, making it impossible to tell the results from the outside. Only through entering the trial personally or waiting for the challenger to exit would one know the results.

As the school heads thought that the new principal wouldn't take too long to clear the trial, they chose to wait patiently outside. However, the wait went on for far longer than they had thought.

An hour!

Two hours!

Four hours!

A day...

But there still wasn't any movement outside, and no one had left the Mountain of Records either.

Reaching the limits of her patience, Wei Ranxue asked with a deep frown, "School Head Mo, are you certain that our principal has entered?"

"There is no doubt about that!" School Head Mo replied affirmatively with a nod.

He was the one who had escorted Principal Zhang there personally, and he had seen the latter enter the trial with his own eyes. There couldn't be any mistake about it.

"Then, why isn't he out yet?"

"Given Principal Zhang's strength, it shouldn't be possible for him to have been trapped for one whole day!"

"Indeed! Could it be that some kind of accident has happened?"

Considering the outstanding talent that Zhang Xuan had displayed in the various supporting occupations, challenging a mere Mountain of Records should be like an easy and relaxing walk for him. How could he possibly still be inside even after the passing of an entire day?

"I'm afraid that something might have really happened..." Zhao Bingxu's face darkened.

It shouldn't take a day for any challenger to clear or fail the Mountain of Records. Be it pass or fail, the challenger should have been out long before then.

Even Hu Yaoyao and the others didn't spend such a long time in there back then.

Something was amiss.

Hearing School Head Zhao's words, Wei Ranxue asked in a panic, "What should we do then?"

It hadn't been long since Zhang Xuan's inauguration, and there was even a huge commotion due to it. If something were to happen to him due to challenging the Mountain of Records... just the thought of the resulting after-effects was more than enough to leave them in a frenzy.

"What else can we do? Let's enter to take a look! If something has really happened to Principal Zhang, we will have to act immediately to save him. In any case, we also need to get to the bottom of what is going on!" School Head Mo said.

"I concur!"

"I concur as well!"

The school heads hurriedly nodded in agreement.

Even ordinary students would only take six hours at most in the Mountain of Records. For someone as talented as their principal to take up more than an hour in the

Mountain of Records, it would be a blatant lie if they said that they didn't harbor some doubts regarding the matter.

It was simply too inconceivable.

They could believe it if the other party had rushed to the eighth or ninth level within an hour. In fact, even if the Mountain of Records had collapsed into pile of rubble within ten minutes, it still wouldn't have been beyond their imagination... But for the other party to have remained inside for a whole day, that was unbelievable to them.

"Alright, let's enter then!" Having made a decision, the school heads quickly pushed open the entrance of the Mountain of Records and entered with their Elder Tokens in hand.

Soon, they arrived at the first room.

As soon as they stepped in, they saw the puppet that had charged at Zhang Xuan earlier lying on the floor with its eyes widened in disbelief, as if a day wasn't sufficient to convince it that what had happened to it was real.

Seeing its state, Zhao Bingxu couldn't help but ask, "What happened?"

"I lost," the puppet muttered with its spiritless eyes. It seemed that it had suffered too huge a blow and its spirit could dissipate at any moment.

"Where there is competition, there will be victory and loss. You are the guardian of the first floor, so it's perfectly normal for you to lose to the challenger!"

Seeing its state, the crowd glanced at one another for a moment before shaking their heads.

Given that you are just the guardian of the first level, the least that anyone challenging the trial should do is defeat you. Surely you don't have to be so disappointed over a loss?

After consoling the puppet, School Head Mo suddenly noticed something that left a deep frown on his face. Perplexed, he asked, "It doesn't seem like there is any external injury on you. How were you defeated?"

Hearing those words, a look of indignation immediately surfaced on the puppet's face

as it cried tearfully, "He looked at me..."

Chapter 906

It Wasn't Just A Look

"Looked at you?" The crowd frowned in bewilderment.

What does that mean?

When we asked you how you lost, what we wanted to know was which move or ability of the opponent did you lose to. It is one thing for you to refuse to reply to our question, but why are you suddenly so poetic for?

Furthermore, 'he looked at you'? Are you going to follow up with how he will never be able to forget your bewitching looks? 1

We are asking you a serious question here! As a puppet, you should be answering our question properly instead of playing with lyrics...

School Head Mo and the others shook their heads.

"I..." Seeing everyone's expression, the puppet nearly burst into tears. "What I am saying is that he took a look at me... and I lost!"

"He took a look at you, and you lost?" Everyone was stunned.

They had heard about how others could defeat their opponent in a single blow with an exquisite move, a powerful palm strike, or a profound sword art... But never had they heard of anyone defeating an opponent with just a look!

Confused, Xu Changqing asked, "What you mean is that the challenger who came yesterday didn't even lay his hand on you. With just a gaze from him, you were already forced to admit defeat?"

"That's right..." Upon seeing that someone understood what it was saying, the puppet was so touched that it nearly cried tears of joy.

"That's right?" School Head Zhao, School Head Mo, and the others glanced at one

another in bewilderment.

As a puppet, you are supposed to stand guard and test the challengers of the Mountain of Records. Yet, to admit defeat with just a look from the new principal? Even if you wish to fawn over him, surely you need not do it so obviously!

If that is going to be the case, how can anyone trust in the credibility of this trial in the future?

On the other hand, Xu Changqing seemed to have a different view of the matter, and he asked, "Can you recount the battle for me clearly?"

"Yes!" The puppet hurriedly nodded and went through its encounter with Zhang Xuan the previous day without any hesitation.

Back then, as soon as Zhang Xuan entered, it immediately began its attack. However, just as its fist was about to reach the other party, the young man chuckled softly, and a brilliant glint flashed through his eyes.

In that instant, deep fear abruptly assaulted it, and its instincts sent it swiftly retreating in fear. However, due to the sudden change in momentum, its body was put under immense pressure, and before the other party could even make a move, it had already sustained significant damage.

While the other school heads were still bewildered by the puppet's words, the head of the Celestial Designer School suddenly began trembling in agitation as his face paled in disbelief.

"Could it be... the flaws in the internal structure of the puppet?"

Even though the puppets seemed to bear some resemblance to humans in terms of physical appearance, they were ultimately products created by celestial designers, and their internal structure was vastly different as well.

If his guess wasn't wrong, it was likely that Principal Zhang had managed to see through the greatest flaw in the internal structure of the puppet. As long as he were to strike that location precisely, he could immediately cripple the puppet, rendering it powerless.

Perhaps, even reparations might be impossible!

In other words, at that moment that the puppet attacked, not only did Principal Zhang manage to find the flaw in the other party's attack, he had even managed to identify the core weakness behind the puppet's internal structure!

That look that he shot the puppet served as a warning to the latter that, if it didn't back down, utter destruction was the outcome that it would face...

The puppet might not have understood the true intent behind that gaze, but its instincts had subconsciously told it that it would face grave danger if it continued charging forward, thus triggering an instantaneous reaction within it to retreat. However, such a reaction caused its momentum forward to be abruptly halted, resulting in an immense force crushing down on its body, severely damaging it before the young man before it had even made a move...

As simple as this sounded, it was easier said than done.

The puppets in the Mountain of Records were specially crafted by the predecessors, and infused into them were the fighting experience of many veteran master teachers.

An average master teacher would stand no chance against them at all.

Furthermore, just as each leaf on a tree was unique, the same puppets created by the same celestial designer using the same materials might also have their weaknesses appearing in vastly different places.

Despite so, to be able to see through its flaws with just a single glance... Just what kind of eye of discernment and battle sense did he possess?

"This works, too?"

"I heard of talented master teachers clearing the puppet in the first level with a single blow, but never have I heard of anyone defeating it with just a look..." Upon understanding what was going on, the school heads clutched their hair in a frenzy.

As the Ten Great Master Teachers of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, they possessed a far wider outlook than most master teachers. In the past five hundred years of their life, they had seen many seemingly inconceivable feats in their life.

They had seen how a weaker cultivator incapacitated a stronger cultivator with a single move, or how a powerful individual devastated an entire army with a single

crushing move... But never had they heard of anyone severely injuring their enemy with just a look!

Yet, the facts were lying right before them!

They had long known that their principal would surely accomplish something astounding when they heard that he had challenged the Mountain of Records, but they had thought that the most he could do was clear the trial faster than the talented Principal Mo Liuzhen... But from the looks of it now, they had been limited by their imagination...

The other party had managed to clear the level without making a single move, subduing his opponent with just a single look... In the entire Master Teacher Continent, was there anyone who could top that feat?

"Let's head to the second level..." Suppressing the shock in their minds and casting aside the many doubts they harbored, Zhao Bingxu and the others rushed to the next level.

Similar to the sight they had seen on the first floor, the guardian of the second level sat on the floor with a blank look in his eyes, reminiscent of a defeated rooster.

"He... took two looks at me, and I was already severely injured..." the puppet explained.

The lips of the crowd twitched, and they hurried to the third level.

"He took three looks at me..." the guardian of the third level cried tearfully.

"A Chrysalis realm primary stage cultivator fighting against a Half-Saint puppet—that is the difference of an entire realm in terms of cultivation—and all it took was just three looks?"

Everyone's body trembled in disbelief.

They had all guessed that Zhang Shi's strength would be extraordinary, and they knew that it would be a walk in the park for him to clear the test. But never had they thought that he would be able to clear even the third level with just a few looks, utterly crushing the confidence of all of the puppets he had defeated!

Didn't he clear the levels a bit too easily?

Back then, when they challenged the Mountain of Records, they were pummeled to the point that they felt as if they already had a foot into the grave. Yet, Principal Zhang was able to destroy the confidence of those powerful puppets with just a look, or two, or three... Was there really a need for the world to be so unfair?

Sensing the gloomy atmosphere drifting among them, School Head Mo spoke up in consolation. "The guardian of the fourth level will be a Half-Saint advanced stage puppet. Anything that is involved with the word 'Saint', be it Half-Saint or Nascent Saint, will be anything but ordinary. From this point onward, it is unlikely that Principal Zhang will be able to get past the puppets with just a few looks..."

And in truth, the crowd also shared the same thoughts as well, but none of them dared to speak up.

As the most powerful elders in the Master Teacher Academy, their eye of discernment, strength, and worldly view could be considered to be at the very peak of the Tier-1 Empires. Yet, for some reason, not once had their predictions on Principal Zhang ever been accurate. It was truly inexplicable.

"Let's head up to take a look..."

Shaking their heads, the school heads knew that it was pointless for them to overthink this matter. Thus, they began making their way toward the fourth level of the Mountain of Records.

The room on the fourth level was significantly larger than the one on the third level. In the corner, a large puppet was lying unmoving on the ground. Its head was bent at an unnatural angle, and its eyes were glazed over, seemingly despairing over life.

Xu Changqing stepped forward and asked with a quivering voice, "It can't be that... you were left in such a state after Principal Zhang took four looks at you?"

Considering how this fellow was in the same state as those that came before it, could it be that he had been defeated in the same manner?

"Four looks?" Struggling to its feet, the puppet shook its head. Lowering its head in embarrassment, seemingly desiring to bury himself in the ground, it muttered softly, "He didn't look at me that much... All he did was to shoot me a glance and say, 'lie down', and I was already left in this state..."

"Shot you a glance and said, 'lie down'?" The crowd glanced at one another in confusion.

In the previous levels, Principal Zhang had eyed the puppets' flaws, leaving them deeply unnerved and frightened, thus causing them to instinctively admit defeat... Even though it was inconceivable, it was still an explanation they could barely accept.

But this... just because the other party told you to lie down, you lay down on the ground... Aren't you being too obedient?

"Wait a minute..." While the others were confused, a thought struck Jiang Qingqin's mind, and his eyes narrowed. "Could Principal Zhang's words have been infused with demonic tune?"

To make a Half-Saint advanced stage puppet lie on the ground with mere words, he could think of no other means capable of this feat other than demonic tunes.

"It was indeed a demonic tune, and he focused his power on my vitals as well... I wasn't even able to retaliate at all!" the puppet cried in lamentation.

The young man it faced wasn't strong at all—on the contrary, the other party to be rather weak as compared to it—but for some reason, under the other party's gaze and command, its body seemed to move on its own and lay down on the floor obediently... Just the thought of it left him deeply submerged in despair.

"Focused his power on your vitals? I thought the strength of a demonic tunist lay in attacking souls? Given that you are puppet devoid of a soul, how did he manage to attack you?" Xu Changqing frowned in incomprehension.

The other school heads carried the same doubts in their minds as well.

The reason demonic tunists were widely feared was due to their ability to bypass physical defenses to attack their enemy's soul directly... While spirit did share some similar properties with souls, they were ultimately two different things fundamentally. Considering how the puppet didn't possess a soul, even a 7-star demonic tunist like Jiang Qingqin wouldn't have been able to harm it with his zither tunes. Since that was the case, how did Principal Zhang manage to make the other party lie down obediently with just his words?

"His demonic tune wasn't aimed at my soul but my physical body. His voice produced

a resonance within my body that threatened to reduce it to dust should I continue to attack him..." the puppet said with deference and horror reflected in its eyes.

"Resonance?" The school heads widened their eyes in astonishment.

There was indeed such a method of offense known among demonic tunists, and it was extremely effective against puppets too. However, it wasn't easy to do so... For one, one must have a deep understanding of the properties of every single material used in the forging of the puppet, as well as the resulting product after tempering and putting them together so as to determine the resonant frequencies.

Otherwise, no matter how loud one's demonic tune was, it would be nothing but futile.

To be able to determine the materials used in the creation of the puppet, deduce its resonance frequencies, and determine the type of demonic tune to use against it with just a glance... Was this really happening?

Principal Zhang, are you sure you are here to challenge the Mountain of Records and not to play around and subdue a few puppets while you are at it?

After confirming the happenings in this room, Zhao Bingxu sighed deeply and said, "The puppet of the next level is at Half-Saint pinnacle, and it specializes in battle techniques. Given the same cultivation realm, even I would have difficulties defeating it... Perhaps, things will get difficult for Principal Zhang from now on..."

"Let's take a look then!"

Knowing that it was futile to be making guesses over there, the crowd moved on, heading to the fifth level.

Just like in the fourth level, a puppet was lying unmoving on the ground, and unlike the one from before, this one was convulsing every now and then.

Rushing forward, School Head Feng of the Celestial Designer School took some time to look at it and repair it before asking anxiously, "What happened?"

"That man... he told me to lie down twice. The first time, I stood my ground and resisted it. However, on the second command, I was left in such a state," the puppet said gloomily.

"He issued two commands?"

"It seems like this level was indeed not as easy as the previous one for Principal Zhang. It took him two whole commands before he was able to subdue the puppet..."

"The next stage is a puppet that possesses the strength of a Nascent Saint cultivator. Considering that Principal Zhang is only at Chrysalis realm primary stage, surely he wouldn't be able to subdue his opponent with just three commands... right?"

"Why not? You have seen the previous few levels, too. Don't tell me that you are still harboring doubts regarding our principal?"

"This..."

...

After hearing the words of the puppets, the lips of the school heads twitched uncontrollably, and they hurriedly rushed for the sixth level.

Chapter 907

Entering the Seventh Level

The sixth level was even larger than the previous, and there were several formations inscribed on the walls all around.

A battle between two Nascent Saint cultivators could easily result in devastating damage; just the aftershock of their strikes was sufficient to induce a disaster. As such, it was imperative for the room to be reinforced with formations so that both parties could let loose and not be restricted by their surroundings.

Walking in, they thought that they would see a puppet lying on the ground, just like in the previous five levels, but contrary to their expectations, such a sight didn't appear before them.

A puppet was seated imposingly not too far away with a disposition reminiscent of a sharp sword, emanating a bone-chilling aura that left shivers running down one's spine.

"Isn't the guardian of the sixth floor a Nascent Saint primary stage puppet? Why does it seem like... that isn't the case?"

"You are right. It seems like the puppet has grown stronger!"

"But isn't the strength of a puppet fixed, considering how it is unable to cultivate? How could it possibly grow stronger?"

...

Upon seeing the puppet, everyone's eyelids began twitching uncontrollably.

With their eye of discernment, they could easily tell that the strength of the puppet had already surpassed its Nascent Saint primary stage bottleneck and reached Nascent Saint intermediate stage!

But... how could this possibly have happened?

Puppets were the product of celestial designers, made out of mechanisms. Even if they possessed spirit, they were ultimately still non-living things, making it impossible for them to cultivate under normal circumstances. Since they were unable to cultivate, how could they grow stronger?

"Could this fellow... have killed Principal Zhang?"

At that very moment, someone amid the crowd suddenly spoke up, and everyone's body stiffened.

Their principal had managed to clear the previous few levels easily, subduing the puppets with just mere gestures or words. Given that the puppet of this level had an abrupt power boost and putting that together with the bizarre disappearance of their principal, could their principal have accidentally let his guard down on this level and been killed by the puppet?

If that was really the case, they would be the greatest sinners of the Master Teacher Academy for allowing such a mishap to happen!

Unable to hold himself back anymore, Zhao Bingxu whipped out his Elder Token, rushed forward, and interrogated the puppet. "Where is the challenger who came here a day ago?"

The puppet hurriedly got to its feet and asked with a smile, "The challenger who came here a day ago? Ah, you must be talking about Zhang laoshi! May I know why you are looking for my teacher?"

"Zhang... laoshi?"

"You acknowledged Principal Zhang as your teacher?"

School Head Zhao, School Head Mo, and the others nearly keeled over when they heard those words.

To make the entire Apothecary School your student? Fine, we will accept that! Making Senior Byzantium Helios and Senior Golden Origin Cauldron acknowledge you as their master? Alright, we will tolerate that too! Taming the entire Cloudmist Ridge... since it isn't entirely impossible in the first place, we will acknowledge that as well! But to make a puppet acknowledge you as its teacher, what the heck is that?

Even though a puppet possessed spirit and was capable of communication, it was ultimately still an artifact, a tool. The memories and knowledge it possessed were all infused into it. To acknowledge another as its teacher... what for?

Noticing everyone's doubts, the puppet hurriedly explained, "Indeed. In truth, I initially intended to engage my teacher in a battle to stop him from advancing any further, but he noticed a clear flaw in my forging process and helped me correct it... It was just a simple fix, but my strength increased by a whole stage. A person of such capability, it is only right for me to take him as my teacher!"

"A mistake in your forging process?" The lips of School Head Feng of the Celestial Designer School twitched uncontrollably. "When did Principal Zhang become a skilled celestial designer as well?"

For many generations, many talented master teachers had challenged the Mountain of Records, but not a single one had noticed a flaw in them. Yet, Principal Zhang had noticed one as soon as he arrived and even corrected it on the spot... Just by this feat in itself, it could be seen that the other party's mastery as a celestial designer was far above his!

This... Was there a single occupation that their principal was ignorant of?

"That's right. It's in awe of his capabilities that I acknowledged him as my teacher. In any case, if you are seeking Zhang laoshi, you should head upwards. He headed to the seventh level a day ago." The puppet nodded.

"Let's go!" After learning that Zhang Xuan had cleared the sixth level as well, the crowd began making their way over to the seventh level, which was also the level where Principal Mo Liuzhen had stopped back when he first challenged the trial.

The guardian of the seventh level was a puppet that harnessed the strength of a Nascent Saint advanced stage cultivator. Against such a powerful opponent, the crowd couldn't help but wonder if Zhang shi would be placed in danger.

"I have read through the journal that Principal Mo Liuzhen left regarding the situation when he first challenged the Mountain of Records. Even for someone as talented as he was, he was forced into a corner and nearly lost his life. It was out of sheer luck that he managed to achieve a breakthrough on the spot and surpass his limits, thus defeating the puppet," Zhao Bingxu said with a grim expression as they headed up.

Principal Mo Liuzhen had left behind writings detailing his encounters while journeying up the Mountain of Records, and according to it, luck had played a huge part in him clearing the seventh level with his Chrysalis realm primary stage cultivation. If he hadn't achieved a breakthrough on the spot then, putting aside making history, he might have been severely wounded or even killed due to it.

The stronger the puppets were, the harder it would be for them to hold back in battle. As such, the further one progressed up the Mountain of Records, the more danger one would be placed in.

For Principal Zhang to have not returned after an entire day, especially considering how quickly he had cleared the previous levels, could he have met with some kind of unexpected situation?

"I am truly in awe of Principal Zhang's strength, but his cultivation is simply still too low. There is a gap of almost three cultivation realms between him and a Nascent Saint advanced stage puppet. I fear that his chance of victory is slim..."

"Indeed. I have met quite a few combat masters over the years, but even so, I have never encountered one who could fight an opponent of almost three cultivation realms higher and emerge victorious!"

"Since even combat masters are incapable of achieving such a feat, how could our principal possibly succeed?"

Understanding how fearsome the puppet on the seventh level would be for a Chrysalis realm primary stage cultivator, the crowd couldn't help but be worried.

Combat masters could be considered a type of master teacher, but their roles and responsibilities differed vastly from one another. Combat masters were, in essence, the soldiers of the Master Teacher Pavilion, and their responsibility was to protect mankind and uphold the authority and dignity of the Master Teacher Pavilion.

As such, the primary focus of combat masters lay in their fighting prowess. Supporting occupations, the ability to impart knowledge, grooming students: none of those were used to assess their capabilities. There was only one criterion they had to fulfill, and that was to wield sufficient strength!

In terms of knowledge and scope of skills, they might even be beneath that of the other occupations. However, in terms of fighting prowess, they were an unrivaled existence

in the Master Teacher Pavilion!

Considering how even they were incapable of rivaling opponents almost three cultivation realms stronger than them, little had to be said for others.

With worries plaguing their hearts, the crowd arrived on the seventh level.

Pushing open the door and stepping in, the first thing they saw were the many formations inscribed on the walls to reinforce the room, similar to those on the sixth floor.

They hurriedly scanned the room to search for the puppet standing guard, but for some reason, there was not a person to be seen in this vast room. They couldn't help but feel perplexed.

No puppet or traces of battle to be seen, what could this possibly mean?

Seemingly noticing something, School Head Mo pointed to the corner and asked, "Wait a moment... Look at that! What is that?"

The crowd hurriedly turned their sights over, and there, they saw a pile of miscellaneous parts lying on the ground.

"The puppet... has been dismantled!" School Head Feng of the Celestial Designer School exclaimed with twitching lips as he examined the miscellaneous parts carefully.

The puppets of the Mountain of Records had been carefully constructed out of several dozen thousand parts, making them an extremely intricate artifact. Looking at the innumerable parts that had clearly come from a puppet before them, it was obvious that someone had dismantled the puppet in this stage and reduced it to its primitive form.

After a moment of astonishment, School Head Mo asked anxiously, "Can we confirm that these are the parts of the puppet on this level?"

If Principal Zhang had really managed to dismantle the puppet of this level to such a state... he really couldn't begin to imagine how powerful the other party must be!

"I can't be entirely sure, but there is a very high chance that is the case!" School Head Feng replied with a bitter smile.

He had never seen the puppet on this level, but based on the miscellaneous parts left on the ground, he could tell that the puppet had a particularly advanced design and forging method that could create a Nascent Saint advanced stage puppet when put together.

For such a powerful puppet to be left in such a state... that was definitely the doing of their principal! There was no doubt about it!

They had been thinking that it would be difficult for the other party to achieve victory on this level, but to think that the other party would end up tearing the puppet all the way down into its parts like that...

Principal Zhang, you sure are vicious!

The puppet is only the guardian responsible for guarding the level. Just how did it offend you for you to dismantle it so callously...

Several dozen thousand miscellaneous parts: even with a blueprint in hand, it would still take a group of 6-star celestial designer several days in order to put it back together... More importantly, that would only be the body! To return its spirit and battle sense would be a much more troublesome process, and they would probably require the help of the Martial Arts School for that.

In other words, Zhang Xuan's act of dismantling this puppet would leave those two schools busy for half a month in order to allow this level to function once more.

However, considering that it would probably be a few thousand years before another challenger would be able to reach this far, there was no need for them to hurry either.

"It seems like Principal Zhang really went easy on the puppets on the previous few levels," Wei Ranxue remarked.

In the previous few levels, their principal had only shot the puppets a look or issued them a command in order to force them to submit. He hadn't used any real force against them at all.

Perhaps it was due to the heightened difficulty of this level that had forced him to make a move.

Nevertheless, even if they were to suppress their cultivation to Nascent Saint

advanced stage, similar to that of the puppet, it would still be difficult for them to achieve victory. Yet, their principal had managed to tear the other party down into its most basic parts despite his Chrysalis realm primary stage cultivation... The thought of it sent endless sighs leaving their mouths.

"Even Principal Mo Liuzhen only achieved a narrow victory back then, and yet, not only did Principal Zhang achieve a victory, he even managed to dismantle the puppet down to its parts... I really do want to know how he cultivates to grow so strong!"

With twitching lips, the crowd fell silent.

It seemed like the strength of their principal was as monstrous as his mastery in his supporting occupations as well. To be able to defeat cultivators of three cultivation realms above him, that was already beyond the average standard of a combat master!

Fearsome!

Previously, they had thought that their principal had put all of his effort into his supporting occupations in order to achieve such astounding proficiency in them, but from the looks of it now, it seemed like they had misunderstood him. From the start to the end, his focus had been on his cultivation, and his supporting occupations were just something he had learned leisurely!

Otherwise, how could he possibly wield such astounding fighting prowess?

There is no strength that comes without hardship! Extraordinary strength can only come with extraordinary diligence and hardship!

Putting everything aside, just the willpower he must have needed to reach this far was sufficient to leave them deep in admiration.

Scanning the room and finding Zhang Xuan nowhere in sight, Zhao Bingxu suddenly recalled something and frowned. "Since Principal Zhang has cleared this level, he must have gone on to the eighth. This is bad..."

"Indeed, it seems like he went to the eighth level..." At this moment, School Head Mo's face also turned grave.

Noticing the unnatural reaction of the duo, Wei Ranxue asked doubtfully, "What's wrong? Is there something wrong with the eighth level?"

Her expertise lay in terpsichorean arts, which similar to demonic tunes, had little effectiveness on puppets. As such, she had never challenged the Mountain of Records, and she possessed little understanding of it as well.

"We fear that Principal Zhang will face danger on the eighth level!" Zhao Bingxu said worriedly.

"You are still worried about that? I think that you can set your mind at ease now! Before the seventh level, we also thought that Principal Zhang would face danger. However, the fact that he was able to dismantle the puppet to this point shows that the strength he wields is far beyond our imagination! With that, it shouldn't be much of an issue for him to clear the eighth level!" Wei Ranxue reassured with a soft chuckle.

They had been a little jittery ever since entering the Mountain of Records, worrying that some mishap could have happened to Zhang Xuan. However, time after time, the latter had shown them through his overwhelming strength that their worry was unfounded.

After witnessing seven levels of miracles from their principal, was there still anything that they needed to worry over?

Even if someone were to tell Wei Ranxue that the latter had cleared the entire Mountain of Records, she still wouldn't have been surprised in the least.

Seeing that Wei Ranxue was oblivious of the matter, Zhao Bingxu shook his head helplessly.

"It's not as easy as you think. The puppet on the eighth level is different from those before..."

Chapter 908

The Frustrated Puppet

"Different? What can there be different about the puppets?" Wei Ranxue was perplexed.

After a moment of hesitation, Zhao Bingxu replied. "To tell you honestly, the guardian on the eighth level isn't a puppet but a clone that Principal Mo Liuzhen made out of one of his rib bones back then!"

"A... clone?" Wei Ranxue was stunned.

"Indeed. Back then, when Principal Mo Liuzhen advanced his cultivation to Chrysalis realm pinnacle, he challenged the Mountain of Records once more, and unlike the first time, he managed to reach the eighth level this time around. In that battle, he felt that there was a fatal flaw with the puppet, so he took out one of his rib bones, and making use of an Earth Core Crystal he had in his storage ring, he forged a new guardian for this floor and infused his fighting skills into it!"

"Earth Core Crystal? Do you mean that rare ore that can only be found near the world's core?" Wei Ranxue frowned.

She had heard of the Earth Core Crystal before. It was an extremely rare ore that was known for its toughness due to being tempered by the extreme conditions near the world's core. Harnessing great heat energy within it, it was an ideal material for tempering one's physical body and forging puppets.

However, it was said that this incredible ore had been completely depleted several thousand years ago, and it was nigh impossible to find a piece of it in the world. For Principal Mo Liuzhen to use it to forge a puppet for the Mountain of Records... even though it was for a good cause, they couldn't help but think his actions extravagant!

In any case, if the puppet was truly forged out of Earth Core Crystal, by no means should its strength ever be underestimated.

Even with the cultivation of Nascent Saint realm pinnacle, such a puppet would be able

to emerge victorious in a battle against a Saint realm 1-dan expert!

"Not only so, Principal Mo Liuzhen has also left a sliver of his will within it... In other words, the puppet of the eighth level is no longer an ordinary puppet but an existence with a battle sense nearly on par with Principal Mo Liuzhen back then! Pairing that with a cultivation of Nascent Saint realm pinnacle cultivation, nigh invincible defense, and a body that knows no pain, it is unlikely that even the Chrysalis realm pinnacle Principal Mo Liuzhen would stand a chance against it, needless to say the Chrysalis realm primary stage Principal Zhang!" Zhao Bingxu said with a bitter smile.

It wasn't that he didn't have any trust in Principal Zhang, but the enemy he faced was simply too strong.

Furthermore, when Principal Mo Liuzhen left behind the puppet, he was already at Chrysalis realm pinnacle, not too far away from reaching Half-Saint.

Between fellow top-notch geniuses, nearly a realm of difference in strength was a practically unbreachable gap. On top of that, the opponent was a monster that knew no pain nor fatigue. It was no wonder School Head Zhao and School Head Mo had no confidence whatsoever.

Wei Ranxue was at a loss for words. If that was truly the case, it would be truly too difficult for Principal Zhang to emerge victorious. It could almost be said that victory was a pipe dream!

"There's no point discussing it here. Let's head up, and we will know the answer soon enough!" Xu Changqing waved his hand to stop the discussion before gesturing toward the stairs upwards.

"Un!"

The others nodded in agreement before heading toward the eighth level.

The eighth level was extremely quiet, but the many depressions of different areas and depths on the wall and ground made it clear that an intense battle had occurred there.

Zhao Bingxu took a quick look at the surroundings and said, "We were late. The battle has already ended."

As master teachers, they could easily tell that the battle had already ended a day ago,

so they quickly rushed into the room and look around. However, they couldn't see anyone or any miscellaneous parts anywhere.

Eventually, they could only stare at one another and ask doubtfully, "So, who won?"

If it was just like in the previous level, various miscellaneous parts scattered about the area, there would be no doubt that their principal had won!

But the ground was clean except for the marks of battle here and there... Could their principal have really lost?

But if he had lost... where was the puppet guarding this level then?

Why would it have disappeared too?

Suddenly, Wei Ranxue exclaimed anxiously, "There is some blood here!"

Alarmed, the crowd hurriedly gathered together and saw a pool of blood on the ground. Judging from the amount of blood shed, the wounded must have suffered rather severe injuries.

"Principal Zhang..." The crowd clenched their fists together tightly.

While the puppet was a clone made out of Principal Mo Liuzhen's rib bone, blood didn't run through its body... In other words, the blood could only have come from Principal Zhang.

For their powerful principal to have stumbled here, indeed, defeating the Principal Mo Liuzhen's clone to clear this level was no easy feat.

Noticing everyone's apprehension, Zhao Bingxu reassured them. "Even though Principal Zhang is injured, there should be no need to worry. Since the puppet of this level harnesses Principal Mo Liuzhen's will, it shouldn't have executed a killing blow against Principal Zhang!"

The puppets of the previous seven levels possessed ordinary spirits, capable of only fighting as they were commanded. They didn't have the emotions or sentience of a human.

On the other hand, the puppet on the eighth level had a sliver of Principal Mo Liuzhen's

will imbued into it, so naturally, it possessed his consciousness as well. After learning of Principal Zhang's identity, it shouldn't have gone too heavily on him!

At the very least, Principal Zhang's life wouldn't have been in danger.

Just as everyone was deducing what had happened, the head of the Painter School suddenly exclaimed, "Everyone, take a look over there!"

Everyone quickly turned to him, only to see his finger pointed toward the ceiling with a dumbfounded look on his face.

Turning their gazes upwards, the crowd was also taken aback by what they saw.

There was a huge '大' depression on the ceiling with a human silhouette embedded deeply into it. The human silhouette had its eyes tightly closed, probably still unconscious from the impact of the blow it had suffered.

"That is the puppet Principal Mo Liuzhen forged!" Zhao Bingxu exclaimed in astonishment.

Upon recognizing the figure, the school heads quickly rushed up to pull the puppet out from the ceiling.

School Head Zhong and School Head Feng hurriedly examined its condition and treated it. A moment later, it finally opened its eyes.

As soon as it opened its eyes, its face immediately flushed in anger as it cursed furiously. "Damn it! Just who in the world is that shameless fellow who came by just now?"

"Shameless fellow?" Hearing Principal Mo Liuzhen's evaluation of Principal Zhang, the mouths of the crowd began twitching uncontrollably.

According to historical records, Principal Mo Liuzhen was not only known for his talents but his composed temperament as well. This was also the main reason he was able to leave his mark in history as the number one figure of the Master Teacher Academy in its ten thousand years of history, respected by many generations of students and teachers.

Yet, such an incredible figure actually began cursing without the slightest bit of

concern for his bearing?

"In the duel, that fellow wasn't a match for me at all!" The puppet that Principal Mo Liuzhen had left behind explained indignantly. "After a few blows, I could already tell that he was bound to lose in the end, so I told him to leave and return only after he had cultivated to Chrysalis realm pinnacle... But who knew that the fellow would suddenly proclaim his admiration for me passionately, requesting desperately for me to impart my battle techniques to him. Not only so, he even grabbed my hands and began spewing praise after praise for me..."

At this point, a regretful look emerged on the puppet's face for falling for the other party's ploy. "After all he had said, it wouldn't have been right for me to turn him down as a master teacher, so I began to offer him some pointers for his breakthrough..."

"But who knew that fellow would adamantly clutch onto my hands, claiming that he wanted to come into close contact with his idol... I thought that his actions were out of earnest admiration for me, but who could have known..." The more the puppet spoke, the more furious it became. Eventually, its face reddened to the point that it seemed like a volcano on the verge of eruption.

Seeing the other party stop at the crucial moment, Wei Ranxue urged it on. "Who could have known?"

"Who could have known that it was all a trap by the shameless fellow! From the start to the end, his goal was to use the Earth Core Crystal within my body to cultivate!

"You all should be able to tell that my body is forged out of Earth Core Crystal... If that fellow had absorbed the energy of my Earth Core Crystal rapidly, I would have surely noticed something. But he secretly stole it bit by bit while distracting me with his sweet words, so by the time I noticed, he had already stolen most of the energy contained within the Earth Core Crystal..."

Even if a puppet was infused with the will of a human, its senses still wouldn't be as sensitive as a human body.

Taking the Soulless Metal Humanoid for example, it was a body constructed mainly for movement and battle. Other than that, its senses and other functions were secondary to humans.

"Even without the Earth Core Crystal, I will only suffer a drop in my defense. But for

some reason, that fellow's physical strength suddenly soared as well. With these two factors coming into play simultaneously, I was sent flying into the ceiling with a single punch and was knocked out from the impact..."

The puppet recounted the happenings furiously.

If it had known that that fellow intended to secretly cultivate using its Earth Core Heart, it would have never listened to his words! The state it was in... Putting aside how it had suffered from a significant dip in its defense and fighting prowess, it had even been utterly crushed in a battle against someone it had defeated easily a moment earlier...

In Principal Mo Liuzhen's many years of cultivation, he had seen many master teachers, but never had he seen one as shameless as that fellow!

Rage, frustration, and indignation bubbled furiously within him, which had led to his outburst upon seeing the school heads.

"This..." After learning what had happened, the crowd glanced at one another with twitching faces.

In a desperate life-and-death battle, such actions would be nothing much. But to resort to such in a trial, especially when the opponent had already stopped fighting... that was indeed a little improper.

After venting his frustrations, the puppet sighed deeply and waved its hands to show that it was over the matter. "Forget it, this is how battles are supposed to be. There is no room for compassion or fairness in it. On the bright side, this shows that he isn't a rigid person restricted by conventions and the sort. A person like him will be able to reach greater heights than others!"

As the role models for others, master teachers were expected to uphold their bearings. Nevertheless, they mustn't be too inflexible, or else how could they innovate and reach greater heights?

Putting everything aside, even Kong shi had been an extremely adaptable person. Back then, he had sneaked into the Subterranean Gallery thrice and mixed in together with the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, disguised as one of their own. Eventually, he had even managed to rise through the ranks, being conferred as a king, followed by an emperor, and so on... Through such efforts, he had nearly managed to wipe out their

entire tribe!

If master teachers had insistently embraced conventions, choosing to follow only the teachings of the predecessors instead of bravely forging their own path, humanity also wouldn't have come such a long way over just several dozen millenniums...

Hearing Principal Mo's words, Zhao Bingxu and the others heaved a sigh of relief.

"It's good that Elder is able to think of it like that..."

On one hand was the will of the esteemed preceding principal, Mo Liuzhen, and on the other was their current principal. As the saying goes, 'the ones to suffer in a battle between deities are the mortals'. It wouldn't have been right for them to side with anyone in a conflict between the two, so it was best if Principal Mo could let this matter go himself.

Shooting a glance at the stairway above, the puppet stood up, turned to Zhao Bingxu, and said, "Since that fellow was able to defeat me, he must have proceeded on to the ninth level. The ninth level is a forbidden ground, so even with your Elder Tokens, you won't be able to enter it. Since that's the case, you should wait for him here instead!"

A restriction was placed on the ninth level such that only those who had defeated the guardian of the eighth level with their own strength were allowed to enter it...

As Mo Liuzhen himself had only managed to clear the eighth level by exploiting a fatal flaw in the puppet, he hadn't been allowed to advance any further back then either.

"Un!" Zhao Bingxu and the others nodded. They were aware of the rules as well, and knowing the difficulty of the eighth level, they had thought that they would find Principal Zhang here. However, the latter had surpassed their expectations and advanced even further.

Suddenly, School Head Feng of the Celestial Designer School noticed something and exclaimed in astonishment.

"Wait, something is wrong... Elder, it doesn't seem like your cultivation is at Nascent Saint pinnacle..."

Chapter 909

The Ninth Floor

"My cultivation isn't at Nascent Saint pinnacle?" The puppet was stunned for an instant before lowering its head to take a look at itself as it exerted its strength.

Hong long!

A powerful aura immediately burst into the air, forcing everyone back several steps.

"T-this is... Saint realm 1-dan? H-how did I... achieve a breakthrough?" The puppet was completely stunned.

It had been a puppet for more than four thousand years, and all along, its cultivation had been capped at Nascent Saint realm pinnacle. Not once had it ever thought that it could still further its cultivation.

"If I'm not mistaken, this must be the doing of Principal Zhang! In exchange for devouring the energy contained in your Earth Core Crystal, he helped you advance your cultivation," Zhao Bingxu said.

After the experience on the sixth level, they knew that their principal possessed the capability to do so.

Most likely, he must have felt embarrassed about devouring the energy harnessed within the Earth Core Crystal in the other party's body, so he helped to alter the other party's constitution slightly to allow its energy to flow smoother, thus enhancing its cultivation significantly.

"This..." Hearing School Head Zhao's explanation, the puppet was stunned.

Even though the Earth Core Heart was important to it, it wasn't the centerpiece of its existence. Giving it up in order to raise its cultivation to Saint realm, it could be said that it was the winner of this deal!

Just that... with its cultivation raised, it would be nigh impossible for the later

generations to clear the trial. It was almost a certainty that they would be impeded on the eighth level, making it impossible for anyone to reach the ninth level.

It was an act of goodwill toward the puppet, but the challengers that came after him would probably be cursing him furiously as they fought the enhanced puppet.

Defeating a Nascent Saint pinnacle puppet was already nearly impossible. What Zhang Xuan had effectively done was create a deadlock on the eighth level, preventing anyone from advancing any further in the future.

At that moment, Wei Ranxue suddenly turned to the puppet and asked, "What is on the ninth level?"

"The ninth level... I have no idea either. I only know that no one has been there since the establishment of the Master Teacher Academy... Probably, the only one who knows is the founder of the academy, Founder Mu Kai!" The puppet shook his head in response.

The one guarding the eighth level was a Nascent Saint realm pinnacle puppet whereas the prerequisite for challenging the Mountain of Records was for one's cultivation to be beneath Half-Saint... In other words, one would have to challenge an opponent nearly three realms stronger than oneself in order to reach the ninth level! Even the incredibly talented Chrysalis realm pinnacle Principal Mo Liuzhen back then had been unable to accomplish this feat, needless to say the others!

In the ten thousand years since the founding of the Master Teacher Academy, that fellow was the only one to have achieved this feat.

Noticing everyone's worries, the puppet said, "No matter what, that fellow shouldn't be in any danger. The main purpose for the establishment of the Mountain of Records is to sieve out the talents of the Master Teacher Academy, so there is no way it will allow one who possesses the ability to reach the ninth level to die in there!"

"Un." The others nodded.

Indeed. A person who had cleared the previous eight stages could already be considered a top-notch genius even among the entire Master Teacher Pavilion, so how could a mishap of any sort be allowed to befall a talent like that in the final level?

As such, there was no need to worry about that matter!

But even putting aside their worries, they were still curious to know what their principal would encounter in the ninth level.

In that moment, they couldn't help but peer into the darkness of the stairway that led to the mysterious ninth level.

...

Rewinding time back to a day ago...

After clearing the eighth level, Zhang Xuan took a look at the puppet, which he had pinned onto the ceiling, and heaved a sigh of relief before heading forward.

Honestly speaking, it seemed like he had overestimated his strength.

In truth, he had already been struggling against the Nascent Saint puppet on the sixth level.

His strength exceeded 65,000,000 ding, granting him a might comparable to Nascent Saint intermediate stage cultivator, but the difference between a Transcendent Mortal and Saint didn't just lie in their strength. Those who had achieved Sainthood had already reached an entirely different level of existence, granting them superior reaction speed and reflexes as compared to others. Even with his greater strength, it would still be difficult for him to achieve victory.

In other words, despite his strength, Half-Saint pinnacle was the limit of his own ability. If he wished to defeat a Nascent Saint primary stage cultivator, he would have to depend on the Library of Heaven's Path.

As such, he offered guidance to the puppet of the sixth level in order to convince it to acknowledge him as its teacher, thus successfully clearing the level.

However, the puppet on the seventh level didn't trust him, so the same ploy didn't work against it. Unable to overpower the other party, he could only dismantle the other party bit by bit while dodging its attacks.

If he had been able to defeat the other party in a proper battle, he wouldn't have resorted to such a method.

To be forced to dismantle the puppet down to its very parts in order to defeat it... how

embarrassing!

On the eighth level, he encountered the puppet Principal Mo Liuzhen had forged using his rib bones, and after exchanging a few blows, he was already severely wounded from the other party's pummeling, leaving him spewing large mouthfuls of blood.

He had thought that the eighth level would be his limit, but he suddenly noticed that the puppet was made out of Earth Core Crystal.

The Earth Core Crystal happened to be the artifact required for cultivating the Fourth Incandescence of the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body, and he had been searching for it all this while but to no avail. Seeing it here, he nearly went frenzied with delight.

However, if he were to ask for it from the other party directly, there was no doubt that he would be rejected flatly. Left with no choice, he could only resort to some tricks up his sleeves...

Putting that aside, using the energy from the Earth Core Crystal, he managed to advance his Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body to the Fourth Incandescence, thus inducing a massive surge in his physical strength.

From its original 16,000,000 ding, it had doubled to 32,000,000 ding!

In other words, just in terms of physical strength, he was already on par with a Chrysalis realm advanced stage cultivator!

Factoring in the 29,000,000 ding from his zhenqi cultivation and 20,000,000 ding from his soul cultivation, his total might added up to a grand total of 81,000,000 ding!

With such strength, he could easily overpower even a Nascent Saint pinnacle cultivator! On top of that, Principal Mo Liuzhen's puppet wasn't prepared for his assault at all, so it was easily sent into the ceiling from the might of his fist and fainted.

(Nascent Saint primary stage 60,000,000 ding; intermediate stage 65,000,000 ding; advanced stage 70,000,000 ding; pinnacle 75,000,000 ding!)

Even though I defeated the puppet in the previous level, my true fighting prowess is still some distance away from matching a Nascent Saint pinnacle cultivator...

While Zhang Xuan had managed to send the puppet forged by Principal Mo Liuzhen flying with a single punch, he wasn't so arrogant as to believe that he wielded strength comparable to a Nascent Saint pinnacle cultivator.

The reason he was able to succeed was due to his understanding of the flaws in the other party's moves from the previous battle and the other party letting its guard down from its underestimating of him. Otherwise, in a proper battle against a Nascent Saint pinnacle cultivator, even with his superior strength, he wouldn't have been able to achieve a victory that easily.

That was also the reason why Zhang Xuan wanted to maintain a low profile. It could possibly become the key for him to overcoming dire situations like that battle.

As the saying goes, 'a tree that rises above the forest will only be torn down by the wind; an embankment taller than the shore will only be washed away by the waves.'

But it was a pity that every time he wished to maintain a low profile, everything would just go contrary to his wishes. This had left him deeply distressed.

Perhaps that was life! The outstanding were meant to live brilliant and short lives.

Considering how Zhang Xuan didn't even wield the fighting prowess to overcome a Nascent Saint pinnacle cultivator, he knew full well that he stood no chance at clearing the ninth level... Unless he perfected the Chrysalis realm Heaven's Path Divine Art and advanced his cultivation to Chrysalis realm pinnacle!

But there was no way he could find such cultivation technique manuals here...

Since I have already reached this point, I might as well head up to take a look! Sighing deeply, Zhang Xuan eventually decided to advance to the ninth level.

Having come to this point, it would be truly regretful if he stopped there without at least giving it a try.

At the very most, he would just have to admit defeat once he found himself in a hopeless situation.

Pushing open the entrance to the ninth level, an extremely vast room unfolded before his eyes.

An elder came into his sight.

Upon seeing the elder's appearance, Zhang Xuan frowned. Mu shi?

It was none other than Founder Mu Kai. He had just met the other party's soul during the inauguration ceremony, so there was no way he wouldn't recognize him.

No, that isn't it. This is a Saint realm puppet that Mu shi forged based on himself!

It wasn't very apparent, but Zhang shi was able to swiftly tell what was amiss about the elder before his eyes.

Naturally, the elder before him couldn't possibly be Founder Mu Kai in person, and considering that it possessed a corporeal body, it wasn't just his soul either. Rather, it was a puppet forged according to his appearance. However, the craftsmanship was so exquisite that Zhang Xuan had to take several glances before noticing it.

Watching as Zhang Xuan walked over, Mu shi's puppet said with a smile, "To be able to clear the previous levels with a cultivation of Chrysalis realm primary stage, you are a truly talented individual!"

"Paying respects to Mu shi!" Zhang Xuan clasped his fist and bowed.

Even though the other party was only a puppet, a sliver of Mu shi's will was infused into it, so its prowess wasn't one he could afford to underestimate.

"Un." Mu shi's puppet nodded with a slight smile. "I possess a cultivation of Saint realm 1-dan primary stage at the moment. As long as you can defeat me, you will have cleared the Mountain of Records and earned the rights to claim the reward from me!"

"Defeat you..." A look of difficulty surfaced on Zhang Xuan's face.

Honestly speaking, his chance of defeating the other party in a proper battle was near zero.

However, if he were to utilize his exceptional capability at tearing things apart to reduce the other party back down to its miscellaneous parts, he should still be able to defeat the other party.

Just that... considering the opponent was the founder of the Master Teacher Academy,

it would be disrespectful for him to use such an unseemly mean against it.

If others were to think that the principal of the Master Teacher Academy had destructive tendencies due to this matter, what would become of his reputation?

"Don't worry. Feel free to use any means at your disposal, there is no need to stand on ceremony!" Seemingly noticing the worries Zhang Xuan harbored, Mu shi smiled. "To be honest, it is already improper for a Saint realm cultivator like me to duel against a Chrysalis realm primary stage cultivator like you!"

"Are you certain?" Zhang Xuan asked with a bizarre expression on his face. "Is it really fine for me to use any means at my disposal?"

"Of course!" Mu shi replied with a smile.

"Since that's the case, pardon me..."

Hearing that there were no restrictions on the means he could utilize, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief as the burden weighing down his heart vanished.

Hu!

The Golden Origin Cauldron materialized before Zhang Xuan.

"Ding Ding, go and pummel that fellow for me!" Zhang Xuan commanded with a majestic wave of his hand.

"Don't worry, it's just a puppet of Old Mu. I will reduce it to cinders this very instant!" The Golden Origin Cauldron nodded as it began to rush forward.

As the Guardian Saint Artifact that the headquarters had given to the Master Teacher Academy at its founding, it had met Mu Kai back then, so it was able to recognize the latter easily.

Upon seeing the sight, Mu shi's lips twitched as he nearly fainted on the spot. Anxious, he hurriedly yelled, "Wait a moment!"

Gesturing for the Golden Origin Cauldron to stop, he turned to Mu shi with a doubtful look. "What's wrong?"

Didn't you say that I can use any means at my disposal? Why are you stopping me all of a sudden?

The face of Mu shi's puppet reddened as it said, "Cough cough. When I said that you can use any means at your disposal, I was referring to your abilities as an individual, such as your battle techniques and your supporting occupations, and not your Saint-tier artifacts... Otherwise, with the might of your Saint-tier artifact, even a Transcendent Mortal 1-dan or 2-dan cultivator would be able to easily clear the Mountain of Records, thus rendering the entire trial meaningless!"

It should have clarified its words further in order to avoid such an awkward situation.

The Mountain of Records was a trial to assess one's individual prowess. If one had such a formidable artifact in one's possession, one would be able to easily clear the entire trial even if one's strength was lacking.

If that was the case, what was the use of the trial?

"This... I see. Pardon me for my misunderstanding!" Zhang Xuan scratched his head as he returned the Golden Origin Cauldron to his storage ring.

With a flick of his wrist, he took out a Spirit pinnacle sword from his storage ring and pointed it at the other party.

"Will this do?"

Mu shi's puppet nodded with a smile. Just as it was about to speak, the sharp glint of a sword reminiscent of a shooting star abruptly flashed across its eyes.

Chapter 910

Zhang Xuan's Defeat!

"That's some fine swordsmanship you have there!" The eyes of Mu shi's puppet lit up as it nodded in approval while moving to counterattack Zhang Xuan's move.

In an instant, the human and the puppet were already colliding with one another.

Boom boom boom boom!

Exerting his full might, Zhang Xuan's sword fell relentlessly on the puppet like waves in the river, each strike growing faster and stronger than the previous.

Even though he hadn't cultivated any particularly powerful sword arts, he had managed to compile the many sword arts he had obtained so far to form the profound Heaven's Path Sword Art. With its prowess, he could even overwhelm a Saint realm expert off-guard!

"But as formidable as it is, you are still too weak..." With a light chuckle, Mu shi's puppet tapped its finger forward.

Huala!

The air right before Zhang Xuan's sword suddenly seemed to have collapsed into an abyss, and the sharp glint of his blade seemed to have been pulled into a whirlpool, draining it of its strength.

Knowing that he would be placed in a vulnerable situation if he didn't retaliate to that swiftly, Zhang Xuan gathered his full strength and forcefully pushed his blade ahead.

Hong long!

The collapsed air abruptly burst apart like a balloon, and Zhang Xuan's sword surged forward with incredible momentum to clash with the puppet's finger.

Huala!

As if having struck a thick wall, Zhang Xuan felt a numbing sensation assault his arm, and a stifled feeling welled up in his chest. In the next instant, he was abruptly sent flying from the recoil of the collision.

Without any hesitation, Zhang Xuan swiftly utilized the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps to counteract the momentum of his retreat while pushing himself back to the ground, leaving behind numerous deep footprints on the ground in the midst of doing so.

After regaining his posture once more, he roared furiously and charged forward.

Huala!

A sword sliced through the air, heading straight toward where the weakness of Mu shi's puppet was.

Seeing that the other party was able to see through the weaknesses in his movements so quickly, Mu shi's puppet was taken aback for a moment before chuckling softly. "Keen eyes!"

Following which, he swiftly twisted, and the weakness from a moment ago disappeared without a trace.

Even Heaven's Path was imperfect, let alone man-made creations in the world. It was normal for any battle technique to have its own weaknesses. However, while Zhang Xuan was able to identify the weaknesses accurately, the difference between his speed and reflexes against his opponents were so great that he was unable to exploit it.

In other words, in the interval between him making his attack and his strike landing, his opponent had sufficient time to evade it. As a result, the 'weaknesses' he had identified became nothing more than a joke.

As expected of the founder of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy... Zhang Xuan thought grimly.

If it had been any Saint realm primary stage cultivator in the other party's place, it would be doubtful if the other party would be able to come up with an instantaneous counterattack to his moves, especially since his moves were directed at the other party's weaknesses.

However, his opponent was actually able to go to the extent of even predicting the next few moves that he could possibly make within this narrow window, sealing away any alternative offensive maneuver he could utilize against the other party.

Fearsome!

The other party's strength didn't lie solely in his fearsome might, speed, and reflexes, but his astounding eye of discernment as well. Put those together with the other party's vast combat experience and sharp battle sense, and the other party was truly a nearly impossible adversary for him to overcome with his current cultivation.

Nevertheless, Zhang Xuan didn't panic.

As long as he makes a move, there will surely be flaws that I can exploit. I don't believe that you can continue dodging until the end of time!

Even though Zhang Xuan usually relied on the Byzantium Helios Beast and the Golden Origin Cauldron, rarely making a move himself, he had collected and gone through many books on combat and accumulated the wisdom of many predecessors, sharpening his battle sense to one that was on par with a veteran general, or even beyond.

Regardless of how profound or elusive a technique was, it was bound to have its flaws. As long as he could pull off the correct maneuvers to counteract to the other party's move, even if it was a God-tier battle technique that the other party was using, he would still be able to corner them.

But of course, that was still easier said than done. Even if he had the Library of Heaven's Path, which allowed him to see through the flaws in the other party's attacks, his strength was still lacking for him to push his attacks through decisively.

"Break!"

With the flexibility of a serpent, Zhang Xuan's sword surged forth, and in the blink of an eye, it was already on the verge of striking one of the mingmen of Mu shi's puppet.

As long as he struck that point, he should be able to inflict serious injuries on the other party even with the power disparity between them.

"A good move!" Mu shi's puppet remarked.

However, as if having guessed that Zhang Xuan would make such a maneuver, it didn't show the slightest hint of anxiety. Instead, it chuckled softly and jolted its arms.

In an instant, Zhang Xuan felt an overwhelming might crushing down on him, suppressing his aura. His seemingly indomitable sword was abruptly halted in its path under that astounding force.

Peng!

The overwhelming might struck Zhang Xuan squarely, and he was sent tumbling back in the air before crashing heavily onto the wall. With a reddened face, fresh blood spurted out of his mouth.

For two consecutive moves, he had successfully identified the other party's weakness and aimed the attack at the other party's blind spot. But... the disparity in strength was simply too great. Even technique was insufficient to bridge the difference.

Wiping away the fresh blood on the edges of his lips, Zhang Xuan shook his head with a bitter smile. I am still too weak...

He was only at Chrysalis realm primary stage, a gap of three whole realms from Saint realm 1-dan primary stage. Even his physical body and soul cultivation were insufficient to breach this massive difference.

Before the other party, his immense strength exceeding 80,000,000 ding was not worth mentioning at all!

Saint realm experts, having opened their Zhukong acupoint, were not only capable of flight but wielded a might exceeding 100,000,000 ding as well. Even if he could find the other party's flaws with his Library of Heaven's Path, he didn't possess sufficient strength to breach the other party's defense. So, how could he possibly win?

Even if one were to equip an ant with a sword, there was no way it could rival an elephant. They were simply existences on two different levels! No matter how skilled the ant was, it couldn't possibly win.

Such was the situation he was faced with. The other party was a puppet that boasted nigh invincible defense, and with his current strength and weapon, he couldn't breach the other party's defense. On top of that, the other party possessed sharp battle sense that allowed it to retaliate against every opportunity he received...

This was truly a despairing situation...

How could anyone overcome such a challenge?

"I guess, I have no choice then..." Knowing that he wouldn't stand a chance in a proper fight, Zhang Xuan immersed his consciousness into the Library of Heaven's Path and summoned a certain book.

Since the other party was a puppet, it had to be assembled part after part. If nothing worked out, he would just have to abandon his dignity and dismantle that fellow into its miscellaneous parts as he had done on the seventh level.

Flipping open the book slightly, the content of the book immediately surfaced in his mind, becoming part of his knowledge.

"7-star Serial Puppet..."

Upon noting the name of the puppet, Zhang Xuan's eyebrows immediately shot up.

The puppet on the seventh level was also a Serial Puppet as well, but it was only at 6-star, so he was able to dismantle it with relative ease. A 7-star Serial Puppet... it was truly hard to say whether or not he would be able to dismantle it with his current strength!

On top of that, the other party wouldn't simply stand idly on the spot while it was being dismantled. Once the other party sensed that it was in danger, it would surely retaliate with all of its might, and under such circumstances, he had no confidence that he would emerge as the victor.

Forget it, I will still have to give it a try!

Taking all of the flaws of Mu shi's puppet into mind, Zhang Xuan took in a deep breath and turned his gaze to the other party once more.

Hu!

Executing the Heaven's Path Movement Art, Zhang Xuan's figure vanished on the spot. In the next instant, he appeared behind Mu shi's puppet with his sword cutting diagonally down on it.

Simultaneously, the fingers of his left hand stabbed for a certain point on the other party's back.

"Interesting!" Noticing Zhang Xuan's attacks on its vitals, Mu shi's puppet abruptly turned around and sent a punch at him.

The punch was not a battle technique or a maneuver, just a simple attack packed with raw strength.

However, Zhang Xuan instinctively sensed that he would be severely damaged if he were to push on. Thus, executing Heaven's Path Movement Art once, he swiftly sidestepped to the left and dodged the attack.

Naturally, his offense also fell flat with this defensive maneuver he made.

What incredible reflexes... Zhang Xuan face darkened.

Never had he felt so indignant in a battle before.

Despite grasping the weaknesses of the other party tightly in his hands, he was still forced back with just pure strength!

As long as he didn't possess that darned strength, putting aside whether he would be able to defeat the other party, it would already be a blessing if he could survive the other party's attacks!

Just as he had found the other party's weakness, the other party had also found his—lack of strength!

As long as the other party continued exploiting that weakness of his, he would be rendered completely helpless.

"Admit defeat, you aren't a match for me." Mu shi's puppet shook his head.

"Admit defeat?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

It hadn't been easy for him to reach the ninth level. Was he really going to have to admit defeat and leave like that?

"That's right. In your current state, you won't be able to defeat me. However, as long

as you work hard on your cultivation and reach Chrysalis realm pinnacle, it is very likely that I won't be a match for you then!" Mu shi's puppet said.

Even though it had been able to easily defeat the young man before it, it knew that this wasn't a problem with the other party's talent or skill.

As long as the other party raised his cultivation to Chrysalis realm pinnacle, it was very likely that it wouldn't be a match for him anymore.

Zhang Xuan couldn't help but ask, "You should have established the ninth floor in the Mountain of Records hoping that someone will be able to clear the trial, but is it really possible for one with a cultivation beneath Half-Saint to defeat you?"

If the other party was just an ordinary Saint realm 1-dan cultivator, his chances at victory would still have been considerable. However, Mu Kai was a master teacher, an expert who had founded the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy at that. His understanding of battle had reached an extremely profound level... It could be said that anyone who didn't possess strength rivalling him wouldn't stand a chance against him.

Zhang Xuan cultivated the Heaven's Path Divine Art, Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body, and his soul... Yet, despite that, he was still unable to defeat the other party. He truly found it hard to believe that there would be another person in the world who could outdo him!

But if that was truly the case, why would Mu shi bother creating a ninth level that no one would be able to clear?

"It is possible!" Mu shi's puppet replied with a nod.

"Really?" Zhang Xuan frowned doubtfully.

"You need not doubt my words; I am certain of that. There are many combat masters who are capable of this feat, and even Kong shi slew quite a number of Saint realm experts before reaching Half-Saint back then!" Mu shi's puppet said.

"Slew quite a number of Saint realm experts before reaching Half-Saint?" Zhang Xuan's eyes widened in astonishment.

He knew that the other party meant killing with their own strength and not making

use of external aids such as the Golden Origin Cauldron or the Byzantium Helios Beast.

To be able to slay Saint realm experts... Was Kong shi already that formidable before reaching Half-Saint?

"Of course. If he wasn't able to accomplish such extraordinary feats, how could he possibly lead mankind in a war against the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe?" Mu shi's puppet replied nonchalantly.

"This..." Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

When he met Lu Cheng and Wu Xu back then, he had thought that combat masters were only that capable. However, it seemed like it was naive of him to gauge combat masters just based on those two.

"Admit defeat. You can't possibly win against me. There is no point stalling for time!" Mu shi's puppet said, knowing that Zhang Xuan was only trying to earn some time to recuperate his zhenqi.

"You can return after you reach Chrysalis realm pinnacle. Perhaps you will wield sufficient strength to defeat me then."

Mu shi's puppet didn't think that the other party would be able to defeat him with a cultivation of Chrysalis realm primary stage. If that was really the case, he would be far more frightening than most combat masters he knew of.

"Return after I reach Chrysalis realm pinnacle?" Zhang Xuan shook his head. "There is no need for that. I can defeat you right now!"

"Oh?" Mu shi's puppet curiously gazed at Zhang Xuan.

"You don't believe me?" Zhang Xuan chuckled softly. "I can prove it to you. However... I will have to ask you to give me a moment. I will change my clothes before battling you once more!"

Chapter 911

Saint Ascension Decipher

"Change clothes?" Mu shi's puppet was stunned.

What does changing your clothes have to do with whether you are able to defeat me or not?

"The clothes I am currently wearing were specially prepared by the Master Teacher Academy, and they are extremely valuable. With them on, it is inevitable that my movements will be restricted. Only after changing back into my master teacher robe will I be able to fight you with my full strength!" Zhang Xuan explained.

Hearing those words, Mu shi's puppet frowned and asked, "Isn't the robe you are wearing a powerful artifact?"

Zhang Xuan was still wearing the robe that the Blacksmith School and Celestial Designer School had specially made for the inauguration ceremony. Not only was it tailored to fit him snugly, it was even a Spirit pinnacle artifact that boasted incredible defense. The academy had paid a hefty sum in order to complete it.

With eyes as sharp as Mu shi's, he could tell that the robe was extraordinary from the very first sight. Even a pig could become a hero with that armor, and yet, the young man before him said that it lowered his fighting prowess?

Wasn't that plain nonsense?

"It is indeed a powerful artifact, but in my humble opinion, I think comfortable clothes still make the best battledress," Zhang Xuan replied with a smile. "Pardon me, but I will have to ask Mu shi to turn around for a moment. I don't really like to expose my bare body to others..."

"...Alright then!" Shaking his head, Mu shi's puppet decided to just go along with Zhang Xuan and turn around.

Actually, it was not completely unheard of for a cultivator to change clothes in

preparation for a battle, but that was usually only for terpsichoreans. Terpsichoreans utilized glamorous clothes to enhance their charisma so that they could better charm their opponent.

Could the young man before it... be a terpsichorean?

But even if that was the case, it was futile!

Terpsichorean arts worked against the soul, but as a puppet, it didn't possess a soul.

Besides... terpsichores were usually beautiful ladies. For a man to be exerting his seductive charms toward it... Mu shi's puppet suddenly felt a nauseated sensation in his guts.

Even though it was a puppet, it could almost feel its goosebumps rising.

At that very moment, it heard a cold and slightly haughty voice speak. "I'm done."

Turning around, Mu shi's puppet saw that the young man before it had changed his previously eye-catching wear into a rather ordinary-looking robe.

"This... You really intend to fight me with just an ordinary master teacher robe?" Mu shi's puppet couldn't help but be taken aback.

It could understand it if the other party had changed his clothes to a Half-Saint robe or something; after all, clothes could affect one's fighting prowess too... But to switch back to the perfectly ordinary master teacher robe...

It was just as if one had switched a Spirit pinnacle sword to a perfect ordinary blade! No matter how one looked at it, wasn't the other party just handicapping himself?

Are you really certain that you are trying to defeat me and not suffer a beating?

"Indeed!" Zhang Xuan nodded as he gazed at the other party proudly with his hands behind his back. "This ordinary robe is sufficient for me to subdue you!"

"You seem really confident. Let's start then." Seeing how the young man before it had suddenly grown so arrogant right after changing clothes, the face of Mu shi's puppet darkened, and it clenched its fists tightly.

Hu la!

This time, Mu shi's puppet took the first move.

Its fist surged forward with immense might that collapsed the air around it.

In order to make the other party learn that his efforts were futile, it had utilized its full strength right from the start, making its attack far more powerful and threatening than before.

"Just what I wanted!"

The Zhang Xuan after changing his clothes stood on the spot in composure, showing not a sign of fear or respect. With a taunting smile, he retaliated with a punch of his own.

"Hmm?" Seeing that the young man was going to face its attack face-on, Mu shi's puppet frowned.

It had gained a clear grasp of the other party's strength from their short battle earlier, and it knew that it was impossible for the other party to withstand an attack of its full might. For the other party to face its punch head-on...

Did the other party change his brain as well as his clothes?

If its punch were to land squarely on him, he could very well die!

At that moment, Mu shi's puppet couldn't help but hesitate and consider whether or not it should retract a portion of the strength in its fist. However, before it could come to a decision, the two fists had already collided.

Hu!

In that instant, the eyes of Mu shi's puppet narrowed.

It was still lamenting over the arrogant decision of the young man to face it head-on a moment ago, but as soon as their fists connected... it immediately realized that something was amiss.

It had expected to overwhelm the young man's punch in an instant, but what it

encountered was a surge of devastating force pushing through its fist, leaving its entire body convulsing uncontrollably.

Peng!

It was truly fortunate that it hadn't retracted its strength. Even with its full might, it wasn't confident that it could emerge as the victor of this direct clash!

"Go!" Bellowing furiously, a crescendoing creak sounded from the joints of Mu shi's puppet as it gathered every single inch of power it wielded in its body to match the young man's fist.

"Humph!"

On the other hand, the young man opposite to it tilted his chin upwards and looked down on Mu shi's puppet with a hint of disdain in his eyes. At the same time, the force exerted in his fist intensified.

Peng!

Before Mu shi's puppet could even react, it was already overpowered and sent flying over a distance of several dozen meters through the air before crashing heavily into the wall.

"This..." With a look of disbelief, Mu shi's puppet stared at the young man standing haughtily in the center of the room, aghast.

It was true that the young man had displayed an exceptional eye of discernment in the previous battle, identifying its flaws precisely and exploiting them promptly. However, the huge gap in the strength between them should have made it impossible for him to injure it at all... Why did it seem like he had turned into a wholly different person just by changing a set of clothes, sending him flying in a clash of brute strength?

Furthermore, from the looks of it, it seemed like he hadn't even exerted his full might yet.

It was inconceivable that there could be such a huge difference in a person within such a short span of time!

Without any hesitation, Mu shi's puppet immediately began to examine the young man

before him from head to toe, but the latter's physical appearance and distinctive soul aura told it that it was still the same person as before. In other words, that fellow had really grown many times stronger just by changing a set of clothes!

With his hands placed behind his back, the young man standing at the center of the room declared haughtily, "You have lost."

"I..." It took a while before Mu shi's puppet finally recovered, and it shook its head bitterly. "Congratulations on clearing the ninth level. You are the first master teacher to clear the Mountain of Records ever since its establishment!"

It was still unable to make sense out of what happened—naturally, it didn't believe that a person could grow stronger just by changing a set of clothes—but a loss was still a loss. As the founder of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, it wouldn't stoop so low as to deny this.

On the other hand, the young man opposite to it simply waved his hands impatiently, acting as if it was a given that he would win.

"You are the greatest talent our Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy has ever had since it was founded ten thousand years ago. As a reward for clearing the Mountain of Records, I will pass down this secret art, which I have held onto dearly for my entire life, 'Saint Ascension Decipher'!"

Paying no heed to the young man's arrogance, Mu shi's puppet chuckled softly as it took out a book and passed it over.

"Saint Ascension Decipher?" the young man asked doubtfully.

"Indeed!" Mu shi's puppet smiled. "As a master teacher, you must have at least heard of how Kong shi ascended to Sainthood?"

"I have... According to what I know, he is a Celestial Saint," the young man replied with a nod.

It was said that when Kong shi made the leap from Nascent Saint to Saint realm, he received the recognition of the heaven and became a Celestial Saint, and the Saint Ascension Platform was testimony to that deed.

He had been there himself, and it wasn't much of a secret.

"Indeed, he is a Celestial Saint!"

At this point, a bright gleam surfaced in the eyes of Mu shi's puppet. "A Saint recognized by the heavens will not only possess strength superior to others, it will also serve as the foundation for him to reach heights far beyond others... Over the years, innumerable master teachers have attempted to emulate Kong shi's feat and become a Celestial Saint as well, but to date... none have achieved it!"

"I happened to obtain this Saint Ascension Decipher by some stroke of luck back in my time, and detailed within it is the process of how Kong shi cultivated to Sainthood, and from it, I was able to compile a feasible cultivation technique!"

"It isn't a guarantee to becoming a Celestial Saint, but if a cultivator cultivates it strictly, he will be able to strengthen his foundation and raise his strength before Sainthood by at least twofold!"

"Twofold?" the young man exclaimed with widened eyes.

Typically speaking, the strength increments for the rise of each stage and realm from Half-Saint to Saint realm were fixed. Yet, to raise one's strength before Sainthood by twofold... Just how strong must one's foundation be?

If one were to achieve a breakthrough with such a strong cultivation foundation, even if one didn't receive the acknowledgement of the heavens, one would still wield strength far surpassing ordinary Saint realm cultivators!

"Indeed! This Saint Ascension Decipher does indeed have the ability to raise one's fighting prowess significantly. However, there is a fatal flaw to it as well..." At which point, Mu shi's puppet shook its head. "Due to the exceedingly strong foundation, it will be far harder for a practitioner of the technique to achieve a breakthrough compared to their counterparts! Back then, I was greedy to aim for the best, but as a result, I missed the golden growth period for me to advance my cultivation. As a result, my cultivation remained stagnant until my death, and this is my greatest regret..."

The young man fell silent.

The other party was right. To gain something, one had to give up another thing in return.

To raise one's strength by twofold before Sainthood, it wasn't too difficult to imagine

the strength of the cultivation foundation required for that. It was indeed good to have a strong foundation, but it also made it far more difficult to achieve a breakthrough.

Take the Heaven's Path Divine Art for example, it had granted Zhang Xuan an incredibly strong foundation, which would allow him to reach greater heights in the future. But in exchange for that, he had to absorb more, far purer spiritual energy than others in order to advance his cultivation, and this was the main reason his progress had been slow.

In fact, it seemed to have been even slower in recent days.

It had nearly been two months, but he had only raised his cultivation by four realms. Just thinking about it was sufficient to leave his face reddening in shame.

"I will leave the final decision to you. In any case, you have three days to study this book, and what you are able to gain from it within this period of time will be dependent on yourself!"

Oblivious to Zhang Xuan's reddened face, Mu shi's puppet passed a book over.

"Alright!" The young man nodded and took the book. After which, he hesitated for a brief moment before saying, "Before studying the book, I would like to change my clothes once more. I will have to ask Mu shi to turn around for a moment."

"...Alright then." Mu shi's puppet was rendered speechless by how troublesome the young man before him was being, but eventually, it still chose to accede to the latter's request.

After confirming that Mu shi had averted his gaze, the young man heaved a sigh of relief. With a thought, an identical figure materialized before him, and just by making eye contact for a brief instant, the materialized figure was able to get a sense of what had happened.

"Alright, clone. You should return for now," the materialized figure said with a wave of his hand.

"Yes, main body," the young man replied before vanishing into thin air.

Naturally, the materialized figure was the real Zhang Xuan whereas the young man who had defeated Mu shi's puppet earlier was his clone.

Just by trading two blows, Zhang Xuan could already tell that he wasn't a match for the other party. Thus, using 'changing clothes' as an excuse, he made use of the opportunity to switch places with his clone.

While the latter was not a particularly reliable figure to count on, his fighting prowess was indeed formidable.

No matter how many breakthroughs Zhang Xuan had made, he was still overpowered by his clone without fail each time, smashed mercilessly into the ground...

Even if Zhang Xuan himself wasn't a match for Mu shi's puppet, he was still confident that his puppet would be able to subdue the latter with ease.

And as expected, his clone didn't let him down. He had successfully defeated Mu shi's clone and cleared the ninth level.

But in a sense, this couldn't really be considered cheating either. After all, his clone could also be considered a part of himself too, so there was no doubt that the strength of his clone was his strength as well.

Nevertheless, Zhang Xuan still chose to do it discreetly so as to prevent the existence of his clone from leaking out somehow.

After all, it was a trump card he could use in dire situations, and it wouldn't do for his enemies to learn about it in advance.

After making the swap, Zhang Xuan informed Mu shi that he was done before turning his attention to the book in his hand.

Chapter 912

Grades of Origin Cores

In the blink of an eye, Zhang Xuan had already gained a deep understanding of the content of the book.

Detailed in the front were the experiences Kong shi had undergone before ascending to Sainthood, and the content was rather similar to the writings left on the cliff face on the Saint Ascension Platform, just that the descriptions were more vivid, seemingly putting the reader himself into the very situations depicted through the words.

It's so complicated? A frown slowly appeared on Zhang Xuan's face.

He had thought that the Saint Ascension Decipher would just be a simple cultivation technique that he would be able to master and raise his strength significantly just by following the instructions precisely. However, it wasn't that simple.

A Saint that even the heavens had acknowledged couldn't possibly only possess denser zhenqi and greater might. One's psyche must also be strengthened beyond the limits of an average cultivator as well.

In essence, strengthening one's psyche could be considered to be tempering one's mind.

Only with a strong psyche would one be able to keep a broad perspective of the world, allowing one to see and advance further.

The mind and body of humans were connected in the most intricate of ways. If one could achieve a state of mind capable of harnessing a world within it, one's dantian would naturally expand to allow the harnessing of more zhenqi as well.

As it watched the young man before it study the book in his hands seriously, Mu shi's puppet suddenly spoke up.

"In the Chrysalis realm, otherwise known as the Embryonic Core realm and Golden Core realm, a cultivator will gather their cultivation and mold it into an Origin Core,

also known as a Golden Core. Once successfully completed, it will merge together with the cultivator's body, allowing them to surpass their limits and advance to a height beyond mortals.

"Since you have already cultivated to this realm, I believe that you should have a deep understanding of it as well."

Zhang Xuan nodded.

In essence, the Chrysalis realm was the stage where a cultivator condensed the zhenqi in his body into a core, transforming it from a liquid into a solid, thus allowing the cultivator to store even more zhenqi within their body.

Once the Origin Core was formed, they would be able to fuse their body with it in order to advance further toward the threshold of Sainthood.

Even though Zhang Xuan hadn't gathered sufficient Chrysalis realm cultivation technique manuals to compile a complete Heaven's Path Divine Art, a zhenqi whirlpool had already formed in his dantian, gathering the zhenqi throughout his body toward it. With some effort, it would only be a matter of time before he managed to form an Origin Core.

"If one were to cultivate normally, one should be able to gather the zhenqi within one's body to cultivate an Origin Core swiftly. However, the resulting Origin Core would only be that of the lowest tier, known as a Third Grade Origin Core!" Mu shi's puppet explained.

"Third Grade Origin Core? There are differing grades to Origin Cores?" Zhang Xuan was perplexed.

He had gathered innumerable books spanning across multiple occupations in the Master Teacher Academy, but he had never read of anything like that before.

"There are, just that very few people are aware of it," Mu shi's puppet replied. "This grading system was proposed by a student of Kong shi, and he intended to make it public knowledge to all cultivators. However, Kong shi forbade him from doing so, and over the years, fewer and fewer people have retained the knowledge of this grading system."

"Kong shi forbade him?" Zhang Xuan questioned in astonishment.

Wasn't Kong shi the World's Teacher, the man who founded the Master Teacher Pavilion and imparted his heritage to all of mankind? Why would such a person prevent the impartation of such vital knowledge?

"It's in view of the welfare of mankind that he made such a decision!"

Mu shi's puppet replied with a deep sigh. "With some hard work, an average cultivator will be able to form a Third Grade Origin Core with ease. However, the same cannot be said about Second Grade Origin Cores... Not only will it require the devotion of a great amount of resources for its cultivation, the guidance of a skilled teacher is also necessary. Otherwise, the slightest mistake can easily render one's efforts futile!

"To make a comparison, the resources required to form a Second Grade Origin Core are at least tenfold of what is required to cultivate a Third Grade Origin Core, and that is a price that mankind cannot afford to pay! More importantly, not everyone has the talent to successfully cultivate a Second Grade Origin Core even with ample resources. It is highly demanding on one's talent and psyche as well. To make things worse, there is a heavy price to pay for failure. Should an attempt to cultivate a Second Grade Origin Core fail, one's Origin Core may fall apart, thus crippling one's cultivation. In the worst-case scenario, one might even face instantaneous death!

"If the news regarding the grades of Origin Cores becomes known, many master teachers would surely take the risk in an attempt to raise their fighting prowess to greater heights. While some might succeed, many more would find their cultivation going berserk and possibly end up dead. On top of that, that will place a greater strain on our finite cultivation resources, this resulting in the weakening of the forces of humanity as a whole!"

"This..." Zhang Xuan fell into a moment of contemplation before eventually nodding in agreement.

The other party was right.

Cultivating a higher grade Origin Core was no easy feat, requiring one to pay a heavier price and bear a higher degree of risk.

From the very start, cultivators were limited by their inherent talent. If a person who was lacking ample capability were to attempt to cultivate an Origin Core beyond their means, it would only end in disaster.

It was just like a greedy snake attempting to devour an elephant. Despite its relatively small size, it still chose to prey on a target far larger than itself. In this case, failure was just a small issue; if things went wrong, the snake could very well find itself trampled to death instead!

This was the same for the cultivation of Origin Core.

But if a cultivator were to intentionally opt to cultivate a Third Grade Origin Core, it could create an impression that they had veered down the wrong path, and their cultivation was imperfect and inferior to others. Such subconscious thoughts could possibly lead to an opening within their mind and limit their future accomplishments.

But limited by his talent, the cultivator would be unable to cultivate the Second Grade Origin Core either way...

As the saying goes, 'ignorance is bliss'. Sometimes, having a choice might not necessarily be beneficial.

"A higher-grade Origin Core grants a cultivator strength superior to their peers, but the price in order to do so is sufficient to groom a Saint realm 2-dan or even 3-dan expert! From mankind's viewpoint, it is clear which is preferable of the two!"

Mu shi's puppet continued. "It was due to his concern of humanity's future that Kong shi decided to make such a decision. From the very beginning, the primary responsibility of master teachers has been to bolster the forces of mankind and bring it to greater heights. In view of that, it is not a big trade-off for the average strength of our cultivators to be slightly weaker."

"Indeed." Zhang Xuan nodded.

This secret was simply too shocking, and it could easily cause a huge uproar among the master teachers if it were to leak out. However, other than bringing huge pressure and stress upon them, there was really not much tangible benefit to it.

As compared to that, why not just remain silent and leave things as they are?

Besides, the primary role of a master teacher was to impart knowledge and pass down the heritage of the predecessors, not fighting. As such, it wasn't really a big deal whether what they had cultivated was a Third Grade Origin Core or not.

In any case, with only the deep understanding of cultivation techniques and battle techniques that master teachers wielded, they would still be considered the most powerful occupation in the world, unmatched by any.

After understanding the story, Zhang Xuan continued his questioning. "You said earlier that normal cultivators will only cultivate a Third Grade Origin Core. Since that is the case, what will a cultivator who has cultivated the Second Grade Origin Core be like?"

"A Second Grade Origin Core... The most relatable example to highlight the prowess of a Second Grade Origin Core is the combat masters!" Mu shi's puppet replied.

"Combat masters?"

"Un. Combat masters need not study supporting occupations, so they will be able to devote their efforts to furthering their cultivation and battle techniques. The members of the Combat Master Hall are also carefully picked, so their talents are likely on par as well. Considering that the Combat Master Hall is heavily financed by the Master Teacher Pavilion and mankind as a whole, it possesses the ample resources too. As such, it isn't too difficult for its members to cultivate Second Grade Origin Cores!"

At this point, Mu shi's puppet paused for a brief moment before continuing. "In truth, the reason Kong shi kept the Combat Master Hall separate from the Master Teacher Pavilion was to pass on the knowledge of the grades of Origin Cores!"

Realization dawned upon Zhang Xuan.

It was no wonder Wu Xu, despite being at Chrysalis realm pinnacle as well, was able single-handedly subdue Hu Yaoyao, Xue Zhenyang, Long Cangyue, and Dong Xin simultaneously. It was not that the four of them were weak or lacking in talent, but there was simply a disparity in the grade of their Origin Cores!

Due to that, the purity of their zhenqi and their strength were inferior to Wu Xu, so it was no wonder that they had been defeated so easily.

"But if even combat masters only have Second Grade Origin Cores, what about First Grade Origin Cores?" Zhang Xuan asked.

If even the powerful combat masters only possessed Second Grade Origin Cores, how powerful would an individual who possessed a First Grade Origin Core be?

"So far, First Grade Origin Cores are only known to exist in the legends. It has been far too long since anyone succeeded! In any case, I have never seen anyone with one before. Rumor has it that Kong shi managed to cultivate a First Grade Origin Core back then... but of course, as such details are not written in the book, I can't say for sure either," Mu shi's puppet replied.

"Only known to exist in the legends?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

"Indeed. In fact, I believe that a First Grade Origin Core is the requirement to becoming a Celestial Saint! That is the reason I wanted to cultivate a First Grade Origin Core, and I spent many centuries working toward it... But in the end, my efforts only ended with a Second Grade Advanced Origin Core," Mu shi's puppet said with a bitter smile.

Several centuries, nearly half of his entire life, he had dedicated to this dream of his, but he had only met with failure in the end. There was no one who wouldn't feel regret in his position.

"Second Grade Advanced?"

"Un. Each grade of Origin Core can be further subdivided into primary, advanced, and pinnacle. In order to form a Second Grade Advanced Origin Core, I had to pay a hefty price, go through innumerable near-death situations, and invest a huge portion of my time.

"Even though I was able to rival opponents beyond my cultivation realm after successfully cultivating it, my rivals whose talents were beneath mine back then had already reached Saint realm 4-dan or 5-dan. It was then that I realized that I had erred! If only I had advanced as an ordinary Saint realm cultivator... In order to cultivate my Origin Core, I squandered the golden period for a cultivator to advance their cultivation, which limited my final achievement. In the end, my footsteps terminated at Saint realm 1-dan pinnacle... Can you understand the frustrations I felt then?

"At that point, I finally realized why Kong shi chose to conceal the news... Those whose talent is insufficient, even if they were to achieve success at the end of the road, the effort and time invested into it are simply not worth it! Can a Saint realm 1-dan pinnacle cultivator possibly be able to contribute more to humanity than a Saint realm 4-dan cultivator? I think the answer is pretty clear." Mu shi's puppet could only sigh endlessly in regret.

Even the longest-living Saint in the world was unable to live past the age of two thousand, and he had dedicated an entire seven hundred years of his early years on cultivating his Origin Core, missing the golden years for advancing his cultivation. Eventually, his bodily functions deteriorated, and it was too late for him to start pushing his cultivation.

On the other hand, those whom he had competed with in his earlier years and outshone had all become Saint realm 4-dan and 5-dan experts... So what if his Origin Core was of a higher grade than the others? So what if he was invincible among those of his cultivation realm? Could he possibly challenge an opponent three to four realms stronger than him?

That was clearly infeasible.

Eventually, he could only conclude that this was a technique for those who possessed the greatest of talents. Anyone beneath that would only be wasting their time and potential.

"As such, I created the Mountain of Records in order to assess the fighting prowess of the students in the Master Teacher Academy. Only those who were able to defeat the Saint realm 1-dan me with a cultivation beneath Half-Saint would be qualified to learn of this news. Those are the people who possess greater talent than me. They might just be able to successfully advance their Origin Core to greater heights and possibly accomplish what I have failed at!" Mu shi said with a sharp glint in his eyes.

"The fact that you were able to defeat me with just a cultivation of Chrysalis realm primary stage shows that you are an incredibly talented person. A genius of your caliber probably doesn't even appear once in ten thousand years... If you cultivate this Saint Ascension Decipher, you might just be able to successfully cultivate a First Grade Origin Core and possibly attempt to become a Celestial Saint!"

Seeing Mu shi's puppet's heated eyes, Zhang Xuan was stunned.

"Me?"

Chapter 913

Cultivating the Saint Ascension Decipher

Zhang Xuan didn't expect Mu shi to have such confidence in him.

A First Grade Origin Core was great, but if it would take him several years to do so, it was clearly not worth the effort.

For one, if he didn't become a 9-star master teacher before he reached 30, the Innate Fetal Poison would act up, and he would breathe his last breath. If so, what would be the point in cultivating a higher-grade Origin Core?

As such, despite how high of a regard Mu shi had for a First Grade Origin Core, he didn't have much of an interest in it. It would be best if he could obtain it, but if not, that was fine, too.

"Indeed. With talent like yours, you definitely stand a good chance. But of course, to succeed, you will need a fair bit of luck and aptitude too." Mu shi's puppet nodded in response.

There were countless outstanding geniuses in the history of the Master Teacher Continent, but not a single one of them had successfully cultivated a First Grade Origin Core since Kong shi.

Talent was important, but luck and intelligence were vital as well.

"Luck is beyond our control, but there is a way to take a peek into one's intelligence. If you can learn the Saint Ascension Decipher and gather seven strands of zhenqi together without them collapsing within three days, there is a very good chance that you will advance beyond Advanced Second Grade Origin Core in the future. If you can't achieve this much, I will have to advise that you not take this route."

"Seven strands of zhenqi..." Zhang Xuan muttered as he recalled what he had previously read in the Saint Ascension Decipher.

In truth, cultivating a Third Grade Origin Core could already be considered the limit of

a Chrysalis realm cultivator's capability. Putting aside that cultivating anything beyond that was nigh impossible, even if a cultivator were to succeed in doing so, it was likely that their Origin Core could still collapse due to their inability to wield the power.

In view of this problem, the Saint Ascension Decipher worked in a manner that forcefully widened the window in which a cultivator could nurture their Origin Core from just Chrysalis realm to Half-Saint and Nascent Saint as well. In other words, as long as the cultivator hadn't made the breakthrough to Saint realm, they could continue to gather zhenqi into their Origin Core and strengthen it.

This was probably how Kong shi built an extremely powerful foundation, such that even the heavens acknowledged his existence when he made the breakthrough to Sainthood.

Usually, cultivating an Origin Core involved gathering one's zhenqi into a spherical shape and refining it bit by bit, turning it from a Pseudo Core to a Temporal Core, then to a Corporeal Core, and finally a Golden Core!

The seven strands of zhenqi that Mu shi's puppet had spoken of referred to the structure in crafting the Pseudo Core.

The essence of the Saint Ascension Decipher lay in gathering one's zhenqi in the form of threads and putting them together in a unique structure in order to construct an Origin Core.

To make an analogy, cultivating a normal Origin Core would be like building a house by stacking rocks together. It was easier and more convenient to build a house in such a manner, but it would be unstable and unaesthetic. What the Saint Ascension Decipher did was give a blueprint to the house so as to elevate the quality of the ultimate product.

In the Saint Ascension Decipher, seven strands of zhenqi put together was termed a knot. Using the prior analogy, these knots could be considered the bricks of the house. Once one was capable of building stable knots, one would be able to start accumulating them and begin building the structure.

The theory was simple, but the difficulty lay in condensing one's zhenqi into thin threads and constructing a structure with them without it dissipating.

Not only must one possess a strong soul, one's control over zhenqi must also reach an astounding level in order to succeed.

"Indeed. You should start reading now. As long as you can succeed within three days, I will impart my experiences and insights regarding the Saint Ascension Decipher to you. With those, at least the blind man I was back then, fumbling to search for a road, you should be able to avoid many detours, and that should save you many years!" Mu shi's puppet said.

"Reading... There is no need for that now. Are the seven strands of condensed zhenqi you speak of something like this?"

Zhang Xuan raised his finger, and with a light tap, a strand of zhenqi appeared in the air. Just as he was about to continue, he suddenly saw Mu shi's puppet staring at him with eyes widened in astonishment, seemingly on the verge of fainting.

With a quivering voice, Mu shi's puppet asked, "Y-you are... drawing zhenqi out of your body directly? And even maintaining fine control over it at that?"

"What is there to be shocked about? I was already able to do this shortly after I started cultivating, it really isn't a big deal..." Seeing the other party making a huge fuss out of the matter like a countryside bumpkin who hadn't seen the world, Zhang Xuan shook his head.

To think that he was the founder of the Master Teacher Academy at that, did he really need to be so surprised over something as elementary as this?

Drawing zhenqi out of one's body, it was not like that was anything difficult to do. Back when he had just started cultivating, he had already injected his zhenqi into the bodies of others to clear their meridian blockages. Manipulating them into fine threads, he could already do so when he was still at Fighter realm. If he couldn't do so as a Chrysalis realm cultivator, he really should just knock his head against a wall and die!

"Th-this..." Noticing the other party's disdainful gaze, Mu shi's puppet nearly spurted blood.

It was not difficult to draw zhenqi out of one's body, but to prevent it from dissipating and even control it finely to form thin threads, that was the difficult part. In order to achieve that, one would have to meet two fundamental prerequisites.

Firstly, one's zhenqi must be extremely pure, at least reaching superior quality!

Secondly, one's soul must be powerful enough to draw soul energy out of one's body. Otherwise, it was impossible for one to control one's zhenqi remotely.

It could be said that the young man's control over zhenqi had reached an unbelievable level. Even he wasn't capable of such a feat when he first reached Saint realm back then!

Just as he was shocked beyond words, he saw the young man before him continuing to tap his finger in the air.

Hu hu hu hu hu!

The second strand of zhenqi, third strand... Before long, seven strands of zhenqi were already floating in the air, wriggling about like tiny snakes as they were manipulated to overlap with one another.

Mu shi's puppet spoke hoarsely. "This... He is actually able to control seven strands of zhenqi simultaneously?"

Condensing one's zhenqi into strands and controlling it remotely out of the body, this was a feat that even most Saint realm experts were incapable of. Yet, not only did this fellow succeed, he was even doing it with seven strands simultaneously... This was way too much!

Are you sure that you are only at Chrysalis realm primary stage?

Could it be that you are a Saint realm pinnacle expert or some disciple of Kong shi who suddenly decided to challenge my Mountain of Records on a whim to mess with me?

Soon, the seven strands of zhenqi were put together perfectly to form a sesame-sized zhenqi ball in the air. It twirled gently, not dissipating in the least.

After this was done, Zhang Xuan raised his head and said, "What you mean is that as long as I create and gather such little balls in the dantian, I should be able to form a Pseudo Core?"

"Yes..." Exhaling deeply, Mu shi suppressed his shock and nodded.

The Saint Ascension Decipher was the condensation of zhenqi into threads before putting them together to form those little balls. By gathering many of such little balls, one would eventually be able to form one's Origin Core.

An Origin Core formed in such a manner was much more stable and powerful than a normal one, just that the effort to achieve it was far too great.

If that wasn't the case, Mu shi wouldn't have spent several hundred years to succeed either.

"Isn't it quite simple? I don't think anyone would need three days for that..." Zhang Xuan had thought that his comprehension of the technique was wrong, but in the end, it turned out that it was really that simple. Disappointed, he shook his head.

If someone needed three day in order to create this, were they even qualified to be considered a genius? He might as well knock himself out with a blob of tofu!

Embarrassed by how easily the other party had achieved it, Mu shi's puppet replied with an awkward smile, "You... Perhaps you have cultivated some technique to condense your zhenqi, which granted you particular aptitude in this..."

It had intended to use that as a test to assess the other party's capability, but who knew that the other party would clear it so easily? It felt like a fool for even proposing it in the first place...

In its years roaming the world and serving as the principal of the Master Teacher Academy, it had met countless geniuses. But... the young man before it was a true monster!

"Perhaps," Zhang Xuan replied nonchalantly.

He hadn't cultivated any technique to specially condense his zhenqi, but his Heaven's Path zhenqi did possess a purity far above that of superior zhenqi, which allowed him to easily accomplish what others would struggle to do.

On top of that, he was also a soul oracle, so the strength of his soul and his control over his soul energy were extraordinary as well.

"Since that's the case, let's not waste any more time then. For the time being, let me see how many deciphers you can build!" Mu shi's puppet said.

Since the other party was able to do it to such an extent, there was no point assessing his talent anymore. It would be far more efficient to push him to his limit and see how far he could go.

As for the deciphers, that was actually the central and most important phase of the cultivation of the Saint Ascension Decipher. Seven zhenqi strands together were known as a knot, seven knots together were known as a bundle, and seven bundles together were known as a decipher.

In other words, one had to condense and put 343 strands of zhenqi together without any error in order to form a decipher.

Back then, when he was still at Chrysalis realm, he managed to form six deciphers before nearly losing control of it. Left with no choice, he could only make the breakthrough to Half-Saint.

For those who possessed subpar talent and a weak soul, it was possible that they might be unable to cultivate even a single decipher.

The other party did possess exquisite control over his zhenqi, but as one who had once cultivated the Saint Ascension Decipher himself, Mu shi knew the difficulties involved. The more zhenqi strands that came into play, the more dangerous it was, and the more likely one could lose control of it.

This was similar to stacking cards up. Stacking one or two of them was simple, but the higher it grew, the more dangerous it would be. The slightest error could make the entire structure collapse.

As long as a cultivator was willing to spend some time to refine their zhenqi, cultivating a knot was possible for most. Cultivating a bundle would be far more troublesome than that, and cultivating a decipher would be impossible if one didn't possess fine control over their zhenqi and great patience.

As talented as the other party was, he was still too young. Furthermore, his cultivation was only at Chrysalis realm primary stage. In Mu shi's view, it would be great if the other party could form even one.

"How many deciphers I can build?" Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before nodding. "Let me give it a try."

Honestly speaking, he also had no idea how many deciphers he could make until he tried it out for himself.

Raising both of his arms, he thrust his ten fingers out.

Tzzzz!

In the blink of an eye, hundreds of strands of zhenqi spilled forth from the tip of his fingers, wriggling excitedly like little dragons.

"He simultaneously condensed so many strands of zhenqi?" Mu shi's puppet was still wondering how long it would take for the man before him to successfully cultivate a decipher when it saw such a sight, and it nearly fainted on the spot.

To easily condense several hundred surges of zhenqi into strands simultaneously, just how powerful was his soul?

Putting aside now, it wasn't even close to achieving this back when it was at his peak!

But the shock wasn't over yet. Not too long later, the young man moved his fingers slightly, and the hundred strands of zhenqi began entangling together to form a sphere of zhenqi around the size of a grain of rice.

At which, the young man turned to it and asked doubtfully, "This is a decipher, right?"

Chapter 914

Reconstructing the Cultivation Technique

"This..." Mu shi's puppet hurried forward to take a closer look.

The other party's zhenqi sphere wasn't big, but it carried a slight glow with the hues of a myriad colors, reminiscent of a rainbow, leaving one's gaze fixated on it.

More than three hundred strands of zhenqi were intertwined with one another, layer after layer, in a unique structure. It was so perfect that it couldn't find the slightest mistake to criticize.

Back then, it had taken it nearly a hundred years of study, diligence, and experimentation in order to refine the precise distance that each strand should have from one another before it had succeeded in forming the first decipher.

On the other hand, it had only been ten minutes since the other party had picked up the book, and he hadn't even flipped open the pages at all. Yet, somehow, he was already able to create a decipher far more perfect and beautiful than his... Just how?

At this moment, Mu shi's puppet couldn't help but feel that the hundred years it had spent on studying the Saint Ascension Decipher had gone to waste...

While it was still reeling in shock, the young man opposite to it continued flicking his fingers, and a massive wall of zhenqi strands abruptly appeared before it, concealing its sight. A slight buzzing sound echoed in the room, and before long, dozens of zhenqi spheres were already floating before its eyes.

Hong long!

The next moment, the young man abruptly clasped his hands together, and a deafening explosion sounded. The dozens of zhenqi spheres gathered together to form one around the size of a longan.

"This works too?" Mu shi's puppet gulped as it felt as if it was going to go insane.

The energy contained within each decipher was great enough to be considered a miniature bomb. As such, it was imperative to be extremely careful when putting them together, or else the slightest touch could result in devastating consequences. Back then, it had spent five years just to put two decipherers together, paying careful heed to the distance and strength, fearing that it would make a mistake.

On the other hand, this young man had actually just clasped his hands, and the dozens of decipher had melded together with nary a problem... Just how deep of an understanding and control of zhenqi must the young man before him possess to be able to achieve this?

Watching how easily the young man achieved feats that had taken it great effort and time, it couldn't help but think that it had cultivated a fake Saint Ascension Decipher!

After forming the longan-sized zhenqi sphere, Zhang Xuan asked with a frown, "Is this how it works? It doesn't seem really difficult... How did you spend several centuries on it?"

It was such a simple method of condensing and arranging zhenqi, yet the founder of the Master Teacher Academy had actually spent a few hundred years on it? Was this for real?

Wasn't his talent way too bad?

"Cough cough! This... isn't important!" With twitching lips, Mu shi's puppet hurriedly shook its head.

The talent and capability that it had taken pride in and others had admired it for felt like they weren't even worth a mention before this young man. This experience had left it so traumatized that it could still brag about his talents and capability before others, but before this young man, it felt like they weren't even worth a mention at all. It felt such a strong feeling of defeat that it couldn't find the courage to speak anymore.

Examining the dozens of decipher the young man had created, regardless of whether it was the strength, distance, or stability, they were all beyond his! Even if it had attempted this at its peak, it would still have been unable to do it any better than the other party!

It could be said that the other party's understanding of Saint Ascension Decipher had already surpassed it.

In that moment, however, a voice suddenly disrupted its thoughts.

"Something is wrong. This Saint Ascension Decipher might seem to be very steady, but there are still many flaws in it. It is still a long way off from being considered the most stable structure," the young muttered with a deep frown.

It was true that the current Saint Ascension Decipher could make the Pseudo Core and Temporal Core that one cultivated more stable and stronger, but through the Library of Heaven's Path, Zhang Xuan still noticed many mistakes that could possibly result in one's undoing.

The Saint Ascension Decipher was an incredible technique, but it was still a far way off from becoming a Heaven's Path cultivation technique.

[If only I could find some cultivation techniques to perfect it...] Zhang Xuan fell into deep thought.

Accustomed to the Heaven's Path techniques, he really couldn't bring himself to cultivate a technique riddled with flaws...

This was similar to how a person used to eating delicacies and donning fine clothes would find it hard to swallow dry bread and rough fabric.

[It seems like I should search for some Chrysalis realm, Half-Saint, and Nascent Saint cultivation technique manuals in the academy's Cultivation Compendium!] Zhang Xuan thought as he rubbed his glabella in distress.

He was the principal who had been granted the greatest degree of authority in the Master Teacher Academy's history. Regardless of which facility he wished to access, there was no one who could stop him.

Perhaps, he might be able to perfect the Saint Ascension Decipher through the books in the academy.

Hearing Zhang Xuan's words, Mu shi's puppet shook his head. "I know that there are flaws in this cultivation technique, but it is already the crystallization of the wisdom of countless predecessors."

Even 9-star master teachers dared not claim that the cultivation technique they had created was impeccable.

The Saint Ascension Decipher had been further refined by countless experts over the years, and while there were still many flaws with it, it was practically impossible that anyone would be able to see through it and exploit it against them. Even if there was a person who could, they would have to be at least an 8-star master teacher, and against such an opponent, defeat was guaranteed regardless of whether the flaw existed or not.

"Indeed..." Naturally, Zhang Xuan also understood the logic behind it. Shaking his head, he was just about to change the subject when Mu shi's puppet suddenly continued speaking.

"Not everyone is a Kong shi. If only we could find the cultivation technique manual he left behind back then, we would be spared a great deal of effort!"

"The cultivation technique manual Kong shi left behind?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

Back when he was at the Saint Ascension Platform, he had encountered a sliver of Kong shi's soul, and the latter had given him his personal handwriting, saying that there was a cultivation technique contained inside and that he might be able to comprehend it if he were to study it carefully...

Zhang Xuan hadn't paid much heed to it, but the words of Mu shi's puppet suddenly sparked some thoughts in his mind.

Could it be... the cultivation technique that Kong shi was referring to was the Saint Ascension Decipher?

The Saint Ascension Platform was the ground where Kong shi had ascended to Sainthood, so the cultivation technique he had left behind there should be related to that! If he could obtain Kong shi's cultivation technique and merge it together with the Saint Ascension Decipher he had in hand, he might just be able to form a Heaven's Path cultivation technique!

Otherwise, he should still be able to make up for most flaws contained in the current Saint Ascension Decipher. As long as the number of flaws dropped to an acceptable range, he would be able to pinch his nose and tolerate it.

With such thoughts in mind, he flicked his wrist and took out a scroll. Flipping it open, what he saw left his lips twitching uncontrollably.

He had forgotten that the writing had been devoured by Vicious...

That fellow had consumed parts of the writing on two occasion, leaving only a third of it behind. Even if there was a cultivation technique contained inside, it was probably already incomplete at this point in time.

What the heck was this? If he had known earlier, he never would have allowed Vicious to do that!

Just as Zhang Xuan was boiling with frustration, he suddenly heard the quivering voice of Mu shi's puppet. "That item in your hand, could it be... Kong shi's personal handwriting?"

Thinking that there was no need to hide it, Zhang Xuan nodded. "That's right."

"Can you... allow me to take a look?" Mu shi's puppet asked anxiously.

"Of course!" Zhang Xuan threw the scroll over casually.

"Be careful!" Seeing how casually the young man treated Kong shi's personal handwriting, Mu shi's puppet nearly died of a heart attack. With a frightfully pale face, it hurriedly caught the scroll and held it gently.

There was no master teacher who didn't carry an inherent trust and respect for Kong shi. If one was so lucky as to obtain Kong shi's personal handwriting, they would surely treasure it dearly, unwilling to allow the slightest dirt or scratch appear on it... Yet, this fellow threw it about as if it was nothing much...

It was hard to tell whether he had that strong a heart or he just simply didn't care for it.

Opening the scroll gently, the eyelids of Mu shi's puppet twitched. "Why does it seem like there is a huge chunk of words missing in the scroll?"

"Oh... It was already like that when I obtained it. Perhaps... it has been left for too long!" Zhang Xuan replied without his face turning red in the least.

"Left for too long?" Hearing that insincere response, Mu shi's puppet was rendered speechless. Nevertheless, since the other party was unwilling to speak, it chose not to ask on.

Soon, it finished examining the scroll, and with a look of agitation, it asked, "Is this... the insight Kong shi left on the Saint Ascension Platform?"

It had been to the Saint Ascension Platform on multiple occasion back when it was younger, and it could recite the entire insight word for word fluently. There were a few words here and there different from the ones he remembered seeing on the cliff face, but otherwise, it was identical.

In response to the question from Mu shi's puppet, Zhang Xuan nodded.

"The insight written personally by Kong shi... If I had found this back then, I would surely have been able to gain a deeper understanding of Saint Ascension Decipher!"

Studying the remaining words on the scroll carefully, Mu shi's puppet couldn't help but feel as if its horizons were being stretched.

It could remember the content word for word, but when paired with Kong shi's handwriting, the feeling it gave was completely different, seemingly guiding its understanding of it.

If it were to work based on its comprehension from the insight on this scroll, it might just be able to come up with a cultivation technique far superior to the current Saint Ascension Decipher!

[Compile!

While Mu shi's puppet was busy admiring in Kong shi's scroll, Zhang Xuan's consciousness was immersed in the Library of Heaven's Path, compiling Kong shi's insight and the Saint Ascension Decipher together.

Hu!

A short moment later, a brand-new book emerged.

Flipping it open, Zhang Xuan took a look, and before long, he shook his head.

The insight that Kong shi had left behind consisted only of the insights he had when attempting a breakthrough to Saint realm; it wasn't a real cultivation technique. As such, the resulting product from compiling it with the Saint Ascension Decipher was only a pile of incomprehensible gibberish.

Zhang Xuan had only decided to give it a try in the hope that he might just be lucky, but of course, perfecting the Saint Ascension Decipher was indeed not that easy.

Sighing deeply, Zhang Xuan was just about to give up when a thought suddenly struck him. [Even if I can't compile a perfect version, I can always work on it bit by bit... As long as I study the insights Kong shi had when he made his breakthrough and match them to the corresponding content in the Saint Ascension Decipher to refine it, I should be able to improve it significantly!

There was no cultivation technique contained within the insight, but the process and sensations that Kong shi experienced were clearly detailed in it. Through it, Zhang Xuan would be able to deduce the zhenqi circulation pathways, thus reverse engineering the cultivation technique Kong shi intended to pass down!

Typically speaking, a certain sensation could be triggered by hundreds or even thousands of zhenqi circulation pathways, making it nigh impossible to reverse engineer the process. However, Zhang Xuan was different!

Possessing the Library of Heaven's Path, he could easily determine whether his deduction was right or not. By putting together the correct pathways, he would be able to derive the complete zhenqi circulation pathway!

[I should give it a try!

Diving into it without any hesitation, Zhang Xuan sat cross-legged on the ground and began deconstructing Kong shi's insight.

Chapter 915

Time to Study

Zhang Xuan had thought that it would be easy and that he could complete the reverse engineering very quickly. However, who knew that by the time he opened his eyes once more, an entire day would have already passed?

Hu!

Getting to his feet to stretch his back, Zhang Xuan massaged his glabella.

Even with a strong constitution like his, he still couldn't help but feel like someone had smashed a brick into his head after an entire day of heavy thinking.

However, it was fortunate that hard work never lied. After an entire day of effort, he had successfully deduced a new version of Saint Ascension Decipher.

It sure is a pity... If Vicious hadn't consumed two-thirds of the writing, I might have been able to create a flawless technique...

In the process of deconstructing Kong Shi's insight, he realized that the intent contained within Kong Shi's calligraphy was the key to reverse engineering the cultivation technique. However, the Library of Heaven's Path had only replicated the content, so Zhang Xuan only had one-third of it to work with.

With two-thirds of the intent missing, it was inevitable that the Saint Ascension Decipher that he eventually deduced would be flawed.

"There are still three flaws... It is similar to the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body—I will require certain artifacts to serve as catalysts in order to achieve a breakthrough to Half-Saint, Nascent Saint, and Saint realm!"

Exhaling deeply, Zhang Xuan shook his head.

Even though it would be troublesome to gather those artifacts, the current version he had deduced was at a completely different level from the Saint Ascension Decipher Mu

shi's puppet had given him.

Mu shi's puppet walked up to Zhang Xuan and asked, "What's wrong? Did you have a stroke of inspiration?"

Yesterday, shortly after it received Kong shi's writing, the other party had suddenly sat down and fallen into deep thought. Perhaps, the other party had also noticed that the scroll contained the key to refining the Saint Ascension Decipher further.

"I did manage to comprehend something," Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

Stroking its beard, Mu shi's puppet said, with eyes gleaming in excitement, "Not bad! After studying the scroll, I also managed to comprehend something as well. Why don't we exchange our comprehensions? Perhaps, we might be able to refine the Saint Ascension Decipher further!"

Sensing the confidence in the other party's words, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but ask, "Oh? May I know what Mu shi comprehended?"

"I feel that using seven zhenqi strands to form a knot is wrong... However, I have yet to deduce how many strands are required in order to perfect it..." Soon, Mu shi's puppet swiftly revealed the comprehensions it had.

On the other hand, hearing the other party's comprehension, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but shake his head.

He had thought that the other party's comprehensions could possibly give him the inspiration to correct the three remaining flaws in the technique, but it seemed like he was putting his expectations too high...

The other party's understanding of the technique was still at a superficial level, a far way off from matching his freshly-deduced Saint Ascension Decipher.

"What about you? What did you comprehend? Why don't you share it with me so that we can analyze it together? You might be more talented than me, but in terms of intelligence, I am confident that I won't lose to anyone!" Mu shi's puppet chuckled confidently.

Against the top-notch geniuses of the Master Teacher Academy, its talent was indeed unspectacular. There were a handful of principals who were more talented than it,

such as Principal Mo Liuzhen. However, in terms of intelligence, he was definitely ranked among the top.

Otherwise, he wouldn't have been able to compile the experiences of those before him and refine the Saint Ascension Decipher, cultivating his Origin Core to Advanced Second Grade.

One must know that very few master teachers had managed to achieve this feat!

As such, he had the utmost confidence in this field. Within the span of a day, he didn't think that the other party would be able to fare much better than him.

"This..." Not knowing how he should speak of the matter, Zhang Xuan hesitated for a moment before grabbing a brush and an empty book and swiftly writing down a simplified version of the newly-deduced Saint Ascension Decipher, which anyone could cultivate, and passed it over. "This is what I have comprehended over the past day. You can take a look at it..."

"This is what you comprehended?" Lowering its gaze to take a look, the body of Mu shi's puppet suddenly began trembling uncontrollably, and it nearly fell to the ground.

It had thought that it had managed to comprehend a lot within a single day, but compared to the other party, its feat was not even a drop in the ocean!

It was as if two rivaling authors had started on their work simultaneously, and while one had just confirmed the name of the protagonist, the other had already finished the entire book... This was the overwhelming frustration that it felt at that very moment!

It was barely at the starting point, but the other party had already deduced the most correct cultivation technique!

The difference was so great that it felt as if it was about to suffer a mental breakdown.

How could the world be so unfair as to allow for there to be such great difference between two people?

Thinking back about what it had just shared with the other party, it felt so embarrassed that it felt tempted to drill a hole in the ground and hide itself for eternity to come!

"Zhang shi is indeed a man of great talent; I am impressed!" After learning about the difference between them, Mu shi's puppet decided to put down his attitude as the founder of the Master Teacher Academy.

Seeing that he had unintentionally dealt a heavy blow to the other party, Zhang Xuan offered his consolation. "There is no need to worry. As long as you work hard, you will surely improve."

"...Yes." The mouth of Mu shi's puppet twitched.

It had always been the one to say those words to others so as to encourage its juniors... Who could have thought that it would hear those words directed toward it at such an age!

But nevertheless, it was indeed true that its intelligence was far beneath the other party. As the saying goes, 'the proficient becomes the teacher'. The other party wasn't really getting ahead of himself to say such words to it.

Shaking its head, Mu shi's puppet passed the book back. "Zhang shi, this Saint Ascension Decipher is something you comprehended yourself. I can't cultivate it even if I wanted to, so you should keep it well..."

Existing only as a puppet now, it could no longer cultivate. As such, the Saint Ascension Decipher was useless to it.

"It's fine!" Zhang Xuan waved his hand. "You should keep it. Pass it to the next person who clears the ninth level!"

The cultivation technique he had deduced was valuable, but it was derived on the foundations of the other party's Saint Ascension Decipher and the insights Kong shi had left behind, so it couldn't be exactly called his private possession.

In any case, it would serve a greater purpose here. Geniuses who cleared the Mountain of Records for generations to come would be able to learn the perfected version of the Saint Ascension Decipher, thus bolstering the forces of mankind.

As for why he chose not to just release it to the world so that everyone could cultivate the technique...

It was not that he was unwilling to do so, but he shared the same worries as Kong shi

back then.

The Saint Ascension Decipher was an unparalleled treasure to top-notch geniuses, but to others, it would only grant them false hope before crushing it mercilessly, tearing their confidence and motivation to shreds.

This was similar to how a billion gold coins might be a small goal to a tycoon, but to ordinary humans, such a goal would only be a source of endless frustration.

"Yes!" After hearing Zhang Xuan's decision, Mu shi's puppet nodded as it bowed deeply. "Allow me to thank you in place of the later generations of the Master Teacher Academy!"

To contribute the cultivation technique he had comprehended unreservedly to others, this was the deed of a true master teacher!

Over the past day of interaction, it had learned that the young man was the new principal of the Master Teacher Academy, and it had been shocked for a long while. However, at this moment, it could see why the other party would be nominated to become the principal despite his young age.

There was indeed something extraordinary about him.

"Mu shi, there is no need to stand on ceremony. As a master teacher, it is my responsibility to impart knowledge to others and leave behind my heritage to benefit the later generations," Zhang Xuan replied.

"Nevertheless, I feel that I should compensate Zhang shi for your generosity. As the new principal, you should be aware of the existence of the Mausoleum of Principals, right?" Mu shi's puppet asked.

"Of course!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

"I took a look earlier, and a breakthrough to Half-Saint through your Saint Ascension Decipher will require a Scarlet Firefly Fruit, which I don't have on me unfortunately. However, I do have the Lightning Resonance Rock required for the breakthrough to Nascent Saint, and it is currently stored in the Mausoleum of Principals!" Mu shi's puppet said with a kind smile.

"Lightning Resonance Rock? You have it? That's great!" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up, and

he nearly leaped up in excitement.

He had already found the Scarlet Firefly Fruit required for a breakthrough to Half-Saint, so that wasn't a problem.

However, the breakthrough to Nascent Saint required a Lightning Resonance Rock, an extremely rare ore that was only formed after being nurtured by nature's lightning over a course of ten thousand years.

The Ten Indomitable Kings of the Cloudmist Ridge had gifted him many valuable ores, but there wasn't a single Lightning Resonance Rock in it. This went to show how valuable it was.

He was still deliberating how he could obtain it when Mu shi's puppet suddenly said that it had left one in the Mausoleum of Principals.

Indeed, kindness begets kindness. If he hadn't donated the cultivation technique for free, it would have surely taken him a lot of effort in order to procure the Lightning Resonance Rock.

"I happened to chance upon one while I was roaming the world, but I wasn't able to find a use for it, so I just kept it with me." Mu shi's puppet nodded.

After which, it flicked its wrist, and a unique token appeared in its hand. "After you enter the Mausoleum of Principals, head to where my body is buried and flash this token. The treasures I have hidden there should automatically appear. Those are the items I saved up over my entire life for the geniuses of the later generations to inherit."

"Thank you, Mu shi!" Taking the token, Zhang Xuan clasped his fist and bowed respectfully.

To think of the later generations even as death approached, leaving behind his possessions and heritage for those after him to enjoy, Mu shi was indeed a true teacher through and through.

"Since you have cleared the ninth level of the Mountain of Records and received the reward, you may return now!" After saying everything it wanted to say, Mu shi's puppet nodded in satisfaction before waving his hands.

It was reassured, knowing that the young man before it would bring the Master

Teacher Academy to even greater heights.

"Farewell!" Nodding, Zhang Xuan clasped his fist and headed down.

Returning back to the eighth level, he encountered the worried School Head Mo and the others. After reassuring them that he was fine, he headed out of the Mountain of Records with them.

When they finally arrived at the bottom, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but heave a sigh of relief.

It was fortunate that he had headed there as soon as he became the principal. Otherwise, once he made the breakthrough to Half-Saint, he would be unqualified to challenge it, and he wouldn't have been able to obtain the Saint Ascension Decipher, thus missing the opportunity to advance his Origin Core to higher grades.

"Principal Zhang, where are you intending to go now?"

"The Cultivation Compendium," Zhang Xuan replied.

"Cultivation Compendium?" The others were taken aback.

"Un. I intend to read through some books and study." Zhang Xuan nodded.

With the Saint Ascension Decipher, he no longer needed the Heaven's Path Divine Art from Chrysalis realm to Nascent Saint. Nevertheless, he still wanted to take a look and see if he could perfect it with the books there.

If he succeeded, he would be able to make breakthroughs to higher realms even without collecting the required artifacts.

"I will take you over," School Head Mo said as he took the lead.

The Master Teacher Academy's Cultivation Compendium was located near the Elder Hall, and it didn't take long for the both of them to arrive there.

The Cultivation Compendium was very unlike the other buildings in the Master Teacher Academy. Despite its majestic scale, it had a rather old and traditional architecture. There was a soothing atmosphere around it that whisked away the anxiety within one.

Knowing that Principal Zhang was just going to study, School Head Zhao and the others didn't tag along.

"Principal Zhang, this is the Cultivation Compendium. There is a total of five floors here. The bottommost floor is open to students with outstanding contribution. The second floor is open to teachers. The third floor is open to elders of the academy. The fourth floor is open only to the principal of each generation. And as for the fifth floor... other principals might be unable to enter, but you should have no problem doing so!" School Head Mo smiled.

Given that Zhang Xuan had received Supreme Jurisdiction and the Impeccable Principal's Seal, there was not an inch of ground within the Master Teacher Academy that he couldn't step on.

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded as he shot the huge building another gaze.

After which, he pushed open the door and stepped in.

After two months...

Here I finally am, Cultivation Compendium!

Chapter 916

Chrysalis Realm Pinnacle

Each library in the Master Teacher Academy had its own genre. For example, the library in the Beast Tamer School would have books regarding beast taming, and the books in the Physician School's library would be on the Way of Medicine.

Stored in the Cultivation Compendium were the cultivation and battle technique manuals, as well as the history, geography, culture, and other common knowledge regarding Hongyuan Empire and its surrounding nations.

Even though the books on the first floor were open for students to browse through, its collection was still extremely impressive. Millions of cultivation technique manuals spanning from Consonant Spirit realm to Chrysalis realm filled the many tall shelves within the room.

It had been ten thousand years since the Master Teacher Academy was established, and many outstanding master teachers had risen throughout the generations. These men had recorded their insights and experiences regarding cultivation so that later generations would be able to analyze them and perhaps surpass them. Some had even created their own techniques and spread them far and wide in the world.

This had given rise to a huge assortment of books for each cultivation realm.

With just a casual look, Zhang Xuan could already find nearly ten thousand different ways one could cultivate the Consonant Spirit realm from the books. Each of them formed its own complete system and heritage.

For any other student, faced with so many choices, they would have to narrow down their choices to a specific classification so as to not overload themselves with information. Otherwise, they could dull their judgement over what was right and wrong, and this could lead to their cultivation going berserk.

However, Zhang Xuan had no such worry. If there was one demand he had of his cultivation technique manuals, it would be quantity. The more of them there were, the better it would be for him.

It took Zhang Xuan around two hours to collect all of the Consonant Spirit realm cultivation technique manuals into the Library of Heaven's Path.

Compile! Zhang Xuan willed.

A new book materialized before his eyes, and he casually flipped it open. It was another Consonant Spirit realm Heaven's Path Divine Art. While the cultivation technique detailed in it did differ slightly from the other one he had compiled earlier, both cultivation techniques eventually converged into the same outcome.

After which, Zhang Xuan proceeded on to the Cosmos Bridge realm cultivation technique manuals, and it also took him two hours to collect all of them.

With those, he formed a new Cosmos Bridge realm Heaven's Path Divine Art. It was much more detailed than the one he had compiled earlier, making it significantly simpler and easier to cultivate. Overall, however, both cultivation techniques were essentially the same.

It seems there isn't much of a difference between Heaven's Path Divine Arts of the same cultivation realm! Zhang Xuan noted as he continued collecting the other books.

Since he wasn't in a rush, it would be good for him to collect all of the books so as to enhance his knowledge.

Ten hours later, Zhang Xuan had finally finished collecting all of the cultivation and battle technique manuals on the first floor.

While these books hadn't raised his cultivation, they allowed him to expand his base of knowledge, granting him some understanding regarding the various schools of cultivation.

With this, he was probably more knowledgeable than all of the master teachers in the academy combined.

Not only so, he had also managed to form a new Heaven's Path Sword Art, Heaven's Path Spear Art, Heaven's Path Saber Art, and such. As long as he practiced them, he would be able to advance his Weapon Intent to even higher levels.

However, Zhang Xuan was in no hurry to cultivate. He chose to head to the second floor instead.

Access to the second floor was limited to only teachers and above, and the battle techniques and cultivation techniques stored on the second floor were significantly more profound than those on the first floor. There were also a few Half-Saint cultivation technique manuals on some of the shelves too.

After collecting the books, Zhang Xuan proceeded up.

The third floor was restricted to only the elders of the Master Teacher Academy. There were Nascent Saint and Saint realm cultivation technique manuals on the shelves, but the overall quantity of books was much less than the first and second floor.

After collecting those books and compiling a Heaven's Path technique out of them, Zhang Xuan had finally successfully compiled the Heaven's Path Divine Art from Chrysalis realm to Nascent Saint.

In other words, he could advance his cultivation from Chrysalis realm primary stage to Saint realm primary stage within six hours as long as he wished to.

Chuckling in satisfaction, Zhang Xuan immersed his consciousness into the Library of Heaven's Path, took the Half-Saint Heaven's Path Divine Art, and flipped it open.

A moment later, a frown was etched on his face.

There was no mistake with the cultivation technique, and if he were to cultivate according to it, he would be able to advance through Half-Saint, Nascent Saint, and reach Saint realm easily.

However, if he were to do so, he would only be able to cultivate a Third Grade Origin Core, and even the weakest Primary Second Grade Origin Core of the Saint Ascension Decipher was immensely stronger than that.

Initially, he had still been a little perplexed about why there was such a huge disparity between the Saint Ascension Decipher and the other Chrysalis realm, Half-Saint, and Nascent Saint Heaven's Path Divine Arts when such a situation hadn't occurred for the previous realms. However, after a moment of pondering, an answer surfaced in his mind.

Within the cultivation technique manuals in the library, there was not a single one regarding the cultivation of a higher-grade Origin Core. No matter how many normal cultivation technique manuals he gathered, the eventual cultivation technique manual

he compiled would only be normal.

A fitting analogy would be: no matter how many straw hut construction manuals one studied, one would still be unable to build a royal palace.

Even if the contents of both covered the same grounds—advancing one's cultivation to a higher realm—they were still essentially two completely different paths leading to different destinations.

Even though the cultivation of the Saint Ascension Decipher is much more difficult, there is a chance that I will be able to cultivate a First Grade Origin Core and become a Celestial Saint. If I were to cultivate these normal cultivation techniques instead, I would stand no chance at all, Zhang Xuan thought.

Cultivating the Saint Ascension Decipher would require artifacts and more spirit stones, so it would be a difficult path to venture into. However, if he were to succeed, he would gain immense power incomparable to if he had chosen otherwise.

Since he could only cultivate his Origin Core once, it was natural he would have to aim for the best!

Having made up his mind, Zhang Xuan didn't rush into cultivating but instead headed up to the next floor.

The fourth floor was an area restricted to only the incumbent principal of the Master Teacher Academy. There were no cultivation or battle technique manuals there, but there were books containing the insights of the preceding principals, as well as information concerning the deepest secrets of the academy.

Collecting these books into the Library of Heaven's Path, Zhang Xuan headed up to the final floor.

The fifth floor consisted of mainly items left behind by Founder Mu Kai. Zhang Xuan took a quick look around the room, and it seemed like the Saint Ascension Decipher manual wasn't among the items. Nevertheless, there were still many valuable cultivation technique manuals in there. Most of the cultivation technique manuals were regarding Saint realm 1-dan, but there was still a very small handful of them regarding Saint realm 2-dan or even 3-dan.

There were also a couple of them regarding soul and physical body cultivation.

It didn't take too long for Zhang Xuan to collect everything into the Library of Heaven's Path.

Alright, I should start cultivating.

After everything was compiled, Zhang Xuan noticed that he had more than a dozen Heaven's Path cultivation techniques and battle techniques in the Library of Heaven's Path. Taking in a deep breath, he searched for a slightly more spacious location in the room and sat down.

Since he had already prepared his Chrysalis realm cultivation technique and the Scarlet Firefly Fruit required for him to make a breakthrough to Half-Saint, it was about time for him to raise his cultivation!

Taking out a couple of formation flags from his storage ring, he swiftly set up a grade-6 Spirit Gathering Formation in the area before taking out a couple of high-tier spirit stones and placing them in the area.

Hong long!

As the Spirit Gathering Formation came to life, spiritual energy was swiftly drawn out from the high-tier spirit stones to form a thick layer of mist in the area. Even without cultivating, the spiritual energy would automatically seep through his skin, nourishing his body.

Zhang Xuan sat down on the floor before opening all of his pores to start absorbing the spiritual energy in the air at a frenzied pace.

The spiritual energy contained within high-tier spirit stones was significantly purer and more condensed than the energy contained within the Earth Vein Spirit Essence, thus making it ideal for him to use in advancing his cultivation.

Closing his eyes, Zhang Xuan began driving his zhenqi according to the circulation pathway of the Saint Ascension Decipher, gathering surge after surge of zhenqi in his dantian and condensing them into strands.

The revised Saint Ascension Decipher was completely different from before.

In the previous version, seven strands of zhenqi formed a knot, seven knots formed a bundle, and seven bundles formed a decipher.

However, in the revised version, nine strands of zhenqi formed a knot, nine knots formed a bundle, and nine bundles formed a decipher.

Based on his deductions, the form that was most aligned with nature and the heavens was in sets of nine.

Gugugugu.

Spiritual energy swiftly gushed into Zhang Xuan's body, and he quickly converted it into zhenqi before condensing it and gathering it into knots, bundles, and deciphers...

As a technique to cultivate a higher-grade Origin Core, the Saint Ascension Decipher was far more complex than a normal Heaven's Path Divine Art, and thus, it was significantly more difficult and laborious to cultivate.

If Zhang Xuan had chosen to cultivate the normal Heaven's Path Divine Art, he should have been able to raise his cultivation by a realm within two hours at most. On the other hand, cultivating the Saint Ascension Decipher, despite having cultivated for two hours, he still hadn't even advanced a single stage.

It was at this moment that he finally understood why Mu shi had ended up spending several hundred years just to cultivate a Second Grade Advanced Origin Core. While the Saint Ascension Decipher had the mystical effect of raising the grade of one's Origin Core, granting one strength far beyond their peers, its demand was simply so huge that it was nearly an endless abyss.

Putting everything aside, even with Zhang Xuan's cultivation speed and the aid of a grade-6 Spirit Gathering Formation, it would still take him at least an entire day before he could reach Chrysalis realm pinnacle.

For what should have taken two hours to stretch out to an entire day... from this, the enhanced difficulty in the cultivation of the Saint Ascension Decipher was apparent.

In any case, Zhang Xuan was in no rush anyway. If a day was what it took, so be it.

According to the notes Mu shi had left behind on the Saint Ascension Decipher, it had taken him more than 200 years to come to this point.

Seated motionlessly on the ground, Zhang Xuan patiently drove his zhenqi, and his cultivation gradually rose.

Chrysalis realm primary stage!

Chrysalis realm intermediate stage!

Chrysalis realm advanced stage!

...

A day later, Zhang Xuan finally reached Chrysalis realm pinnacle. In his current state, he was only a step away from making a breakthrough to Half-Saint.

My strength has grown tremendously...

Halting his cultivation, Zhang Xuan took an inward look at his physical state, and he couldn't help but remark in awe.

For an ordinary Chrysalis realm cultivator, the rise in strength at each cultivation stage was 3,000,000 ding. However, having cultivated the Saint Ascension Decipher, Zhang Xuan's rise in strength per stage was 6,000,000 ding!

(Ordinary Chrysalis realm: primary stage 25,000,000 ding, intermediate stage 28,000,000 ding; advanced stage 31,000,000 ding; pinnacle 34,000,000 ding.)

The strength derived from his zhenqi cultivation had been 29,000,000 ding initially, but after reaching Chrysalis realm pinnacle, it had increased by 18,000,000 ding to 47,000,000 ding!

If the 20,000,000 ding and 32,000,000 ding from his soul cultivation and physical body cultivation were taken into account as well, his strength would be 99,000,000 ding, just a bit short of matching the 100,000,000 ding strength that Saint realm cultivators wielded!

In other words, in terms of strength, he was nearly on par with Saint realm experts.

Scary!

For a Chrysalis realm pinnacle cultivator to be comparable to a Saint realm cultivator in terms of pure strength, would anyone in the Master Teacher Continent believe his words if he were to tell them about this?

But while Zhang Xuan did wield strength comparable to a Saint realm cultivator, he would still be in a disadvantageous position in a fight against a real Saint realm cultivator.

The superior strength of Saints wasn't derived merely from the boost in their strength but their enhanced comprehension of the laws of the world as well. For one, Saint realm cultivators were capable of dealing long-range attacks with minimal dissipation in might. On the other hand, if Zhang Xuan wanted to utilize the strength of his physical body and soul cultivation as well, he needed to be in close quarters with his opponent... Without those two to augment his attacks, his might would only be at 47,000,000 ding, comparable to only a Half-Saint advanced stage cultivator.

Nevertheless, his current fighting prowess was still extremely frightening. Even Principal Mo Liuzhen wouldn't have been a match for him at all.

After relishing in his newfound power, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but look at the dust remnants on the ground with a bitter smile. My fighting prowess did grow by a lot, but the consumption of high-tier spirit stones is truly...

The Saint Ascension Decipher could indeed further reinforce the foundation of his cultivation and enhance the richness of his zhenqi, granting him superior might. However, this came at a heavy price. For one, just the consumption of high-tier spirit stones was sufficient to leave him frenzied.

He had received a few hundred high-tier spirit stones from Wu Xu and Lu Cheng back then, and adding in the ones he had procured from the Golden Beartiger Beast's storage ring and the congratulatory gifts from the Cloudmist Ridge for his inauguration ceremony, he had possessed a total of around eight hundred spirit stones, making him richer than any of the Ten Great Master Teachers in the academy.

Yet, just to advance from Chrysalis realm primary stage to pinnacle, he had consumed five hundred of them. That was more than half of his wealth!

He could almost see a life of poverty waiting right ahead of him.

Chapter 917

Another Breakthrough, Half-Saint Reached!

Zhang Xuan sighed deeply before muttering beneath his breath.

"Forget it, I will just have to find a way to deal with it when the time comes. For the time being, it is more important for me to raise my cultivation!"

He was only a step away from reaching Half-Saint, and he happened to have the Scarlet Firefly Fruit required for his breakthrough as well. Since that was the case, there was no need for him to hesitate.

Conditioning his state back to its peak, he took a deep breath before reluctantly tossing his remaining three hundred high-tier spirit stones into the Spirit Gathering Formation.

Hu hu hu!

As soon as the high-tier spirit stones came into contact with the formation, the concentration of spiritual energy in the area swiftly rose to the point that it felt almost tangible.

Following which, Zhang Xuan took out a Scarlet Firefly Fruit and swallowed it.

Back in the valley, he had procured a total of ten of them. Hu Yaoyao and the others had taken four of them, and having achieved a breakthrough each, they had not required any more. Thus, the remaining six had gone into his storage ring.

As soon as the Scarlet Firefly Fruit entered his mouth, it melted into an immense surge of energy, which gushed through his body. In just a short moment, he could vaguely feel an impetus, driving him to a breakthrough.

However, the impetus wasn't very strong. Zhang Xuan knew that with the current momentum he had, there was a high chance that he would fail in his breakthrough. Thus, he took out another Scarlet Firefly Fruit and consumed it.

It took a total of four fruits before Zhang Xuan was finally satisfied. Feeling the immense power coursing through his meridians, he took a deep breath and absorbed the surrounding spiritual energy into his body.

Hong long!

A crisp echo sounded in the room, as if the shackles that had been trapping Zhang Xuan's body had been broken. At the same time, it also seemed as if a door leading to a new world had opened before his eyes.

All of his pores opened simultaneously, drawing the surrounding spiritual energy furiously into him, driving the evolution of his body and soul toward that of a higher being.

Half-Saint... reached!

At Half-Saint, one was still a considerable distance away from achieving Sainthood, but nevertheless, one would no longer be considered to be on the same level of existence as a Transcendent Mortal. Be it one's physical body or soul, they had both undergone a qualitative evolution to become far stronger and more resilient than before, thus lengthening one's lifespan significantly as well.

The limit of an average Transcendent Mortal's lifespan was two hundred whereas a Half-Saint could easily live to five hundred!

That was more than a twofold increase in one's lifespan!

Other than that, Zhang Xuan's strength had also increased significantly. From the initial 47,000,000 ding, it had risen by 13,000,000 ding to 60,000,000 ding!

Just in terms of the strength he could draw from his zhenqi cultivation, he was already on par with a Nascent Saint primary stage cultivator!

Paired with his physical body and soul cultivation, he would be able to easily kill any Saint realm 1-dan expert at close range!

Other than the rise in his strength, his reaction speed and reflexes had also grown immensely.

If he were to face Mu shi's puppet once again in battle, he would surely be able to

defeat the other party easily!

It is great that my fighting prowess has grown so much, but... I am back to my broke days once more! Zhang Xuan lamented.

The items he had received in the inauguration ceremony a few days ago had left him greatly excited, and he had thought that he could finally be considered a tycoon. As such, he had haughtily turned down the gifts from many, thinking that he should uphold his standing. Yet, a single round of cultivation had undone everything...

This darned cultivation! It sure was like an endless abyss, dragging him back to square one each time he thought he had struck it rich.

He knew that the cultivating the Saint Ascension Decipher would surely require a lot of zhenqi, and the fact that he cultivated the Heaven's Path Divine Art only served to nudge the requirement even higher. A couple of high-tier spirit stones could easily help others raise their cultivation up several stages, but to him, it was as if throwing pebbles into a pond, raising just a momentary ripple and nothing else.

Going by even my most conservative estimates, advancing to Saint realm... will cost me at least five thousand high-tier spirit stones! Zhang Xuan thought with twitching lips.

He had been thinking of advancing straight to Saint realm in a single breath after the inauguration ceremony, but that was clearly impossible now.

Advancing from Chrysalis realm primary stage to Half-Saint primary stage, despite using the energy contained within four Scarlet Firefly Fruits, had still depleted eight hundred high-tier spirit stones. The numbers would only rise for his breakthrough to Nascent Saint and eventually Saint realm. At this rate, five thousand would be a truly, truly positive estimate.

But the problem was that even if he were to overturn the entire Master Teacher Academy, he would still be unable to gather that many high-tier spirit stones!

Rubbing his glabella, Zhang Xuan thought in frustration, It seems like I will have to head out and find a way to earn some money...

Really, what was with this?

When others cultivated, what they would be frustrated by was their bottleneck. But instead of worrying over that, his problem had always been being 'poor'.

Was this what they meant when they said that 'being poor limits one's imagination'?

If it really comes down to it, I will just have to sell the congratulatory gifts from the Cloudmist Ridge. That should tide me over for a while...

The gifts his tamed beasts from the Cloudmist Ridge had given him were indeed very valuable, and if he were to sell them, he would be able to earn two to three thousand high-tier spirit stones easily. However...

There were simply too few people in Hongyuan City who could afford to buy anything from him! Not even the royal family had that much money!

If he couldn't find ample spirit stones, he wouldn't be able to advance his cultivation despite possessing the complete Saint Ascension Decipher.

I almost forgot! Are the pavilion masters from the Master Teacher Pavilion of the surrounding empires still around? Perhaps, I might be able to sell my goods to them...

Back when School Head Mo was briefing him about the inauguration ceremony, he had also done a brief introduction on the four nearby Tier-1 Empires, Hongchi, Yuanjiang, Baituo, and Chiyao.

The national strengths of these four empires were comparable to Hongyuan Empire, perhaps exceeding it even.

If he could sell his goods to them, he should be able to earn quite a number of high-tier spirit stones to tide him over...

Zhang Xuan stroked his lower jaw contemplatively before rising to his feet and heading out of the Cultivation Compendium.

I think this is a plausible idea. However, for the time being, I should first get the Lightning Resonance Stone in the Mausoleum of Principals.

The Lightning Resonance Stone was the artifact he required as a catalyst for his breakthrough from Half-Saint to Nascent Saint. Already at Half-Saint, as long as he could gather sufficient high-tier spirit stones, it wouldn't be too long before he needed

it to make a breakthrough. Thus, it would be best for him to take it and keep it on him.

After leaving the Cultivation Compendium, Zhang Xuan went to look for School Head Mo, and just as he was about to speak, the latter suddenly looked at him excitedly and said, "Principal Zhang, congratulations!"

Bewildered, Zhang Xuan shot the other party a questioning gaze.

"Weren't you trying to purchase the blood essence of a Saint realm Myriad Anthive Queen earlier? I sent in the application to the Beast Hall headquarters a while ago, and they approved the request! Just this morning, the Saint realm Myriad Anthive Queen's blood essence arrived at our Master Teacher Academy!" School Head Mo said excitedly. "Oh yes, your 7-star beast tamer emblem also arrived together with it!"

After which, School Head Mo quickly passed over a jade bottle and an emblem.

Zhang Xuan took those two items from School Head Mo's hands and studied the jade bottle with a perplexed expression before turning his gaze back to the latter. He asked, "Didn't you say that the Myriad Anthive Queen's blood essence would be expensive? Why would..."

The cultivation of his Myriad Anthive Queen was currently too low, rendering it incapable of continuing the expansion the Myriad Anthive Nest unless its cultivation was raised one way or another. Thus, a few days earlier, Zhang Xuan had paid School Head Mo a visit to enquire about the purchase of a Saint realm Myriad Anthive Queen's blood essence. However, the answer he had received was that it would cost at least several thousand high-tier spirit stones.

Until now, Zhang Xuan had yet to gather so many high-tier spirit stones, so why would the headquarters deliver the blood essence all of a sudden?

"It is indeed expensive, but Principal Zhang, you tamed all of the spirit beasts and saint beasts on the Cloudmist Ridge, and that is a huge contribution! Thus, the Beast Tamer Hall headquarters decided to gift this bottle of Myriad Anthive Queen's blood essence to you directly as a reward!" School Head Mo explained with a smile.

"On top of that, they have also expressed their interest in inviting you to the Qingyuan Empire Beast Hall to impart your technique for taming spirit beasts swiftly!"

Not expecting for there to be such a benefit from taming the beasts of the Cloudmist

Ridge, Zhang Xuan nodded in delight.

"I see! Help me relay my thanks to the headquarters of the Beast Hall. I will definitely head there if I have an opportunity to do so in the future..."

As he uncorked the jade bottle, the scent of the blood essence within immediately permeated the air. Within the bottle, he could feel an immense energy being harnessed within the fluid.

After a quick glance, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but widen his eyes in shock. "Isn't this... the blood essence of a Saint realm 4-dan Myriad Anthive Queen?"

When he made the request, he had expected the blood essence to be from a Saint realm 1-dan or 2-dan Myriad Anthive Queen. Never in his dreams had he thought that it would be from a Saint realm 4-dan Myriad Anthive Queen!

It was already incredibly difficult to find a single one of the elusive Myriad Anthive Queens, needless to say a Saint realm 4-dan one. This was an unimaginably valuable commodity that was nearly impossible to find on the market! Yet, the other party had actually given so much of it at once... If he really had to pay for it, there was no way he would have been able to afford it!

With this, the strength of the Myriad Anthive Queen would soar, and it wouldn't be long before it achieved a breakthrough to Saint realm!

Flicking his wrist, Zhang Xuan placed the jade bottle into the Myriad Anthive Nest for the Myriad Anthive Queen to consume before turning his gaze to the 7-star beast tamer emblem.

The design was identical to that of the 4-star emblem he had, just that the four stars had been replaced with seven stars instead. However, one thing noteworthy was that the material of the emblem had changed. It felt a little heavier and solemn, seemingly reflecting the noble standing of the one who possessed it.

Even though he was a 7-star demonic tunist as well, ultimately, demonic tunist was only considered a Lower Nine Paths occupation. It could hardly compare with the prestigious Upper Nine Paths occupations.

Even if Zhang Xuan didn't have his identity as the principal of the Master Teacher Academy, just by this 7-star beast tamer emblem in itself, there was no one who would

dare underestimate or disrespect him, regardless of where he went.

"Thank you, School Head Mo."

Knowing that the other party must have done quite a bit of work to apply for this emblem for him, Zhang Xuan clasped his fist in gratitude.

"There is no need for that." School Head Mo shook his head with a smile before gazing at Zhang Xuan intently. "Speaking of which, when do you intend to take the 6-star master teacher examination? I will have to make preparations in advance..."

"You should start making preparations then; I intend to take it as soon as possible. But before that, I would like to make a trip to the Mausoleum of Principals," Zhang Xuan said.

"Mausoleum of Principals?" School Head Mo was surprised for a moment before shaking his head. "I'm afraid that you might not have the authority to enter it at the moment..."

"Why?" Zhang Xuan frowned, perplexed by School Head Mo's words.

He had obtained the Supreme Jurisdiction and Impeccable Principal's Seal, was there anywhere in the Master Teacher Academy that he was still restricted from entering?

Fearing that Zhang Xuan would misunderstand, School Head Mo swiftly explained the matter, "You are indeed able to go anywhere you wish in the Master Teacher Academy, having received everyone's approval in the inauguration ceremony, but... to enter the Mausoleum of Principals, you will have to sever a portion of your soul and leave it on the Mausoleum Tablet... In other words, you have to leave a will behind as well!"

"The severing of the soul inflicts considerable damage to one's soul, so why don't you challenge the 6-star master teacher examination first? Meanwhile, using your contribution, I can help you apply for an artifact for severing your soul from the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters. This way, the damage to your soul will be minimized!"

Taming the spirit beasts and saint beasts of the Cloudmist Ridge was as huge a contribution to the Master Teacher Pavilion as it was to the Beast Hall.

Through the contribution, Zhang Xuan could easily apply for a powerful artifact to aid in the matter.

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan nodded.

Given that the preceding principals of the Master Teacher Academy had appeared in the inauguration ceremony, it would mean that they had also severed their souls and left behind their will when they were alive.

Having severed his soul once in the past, he knew that it was a process that was highly damaging, even for soul oracles, who specialized in souls. It would take a long period of recuperation before one could recover from the trauma.

However, Zhang Xuan had the soul of the Bluehorn Dragon Beast in his possession, which he could use to quicken the recovery of his soul. However, if he were to do so, he would risk exposing his identity as a soul oracle, which could pose to be a great trouble.

After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan nodded. "I see. I will take the 6-star master teacher examination first then."

It was one thing if he was just a normal master teacher, but as the new principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher, his identity as a soul oracle could not be revealed by any means.

In any case, it was not like anyone else could get to the Lightning Resonance Stone before him, so taking the 6-star master teacher examination first wasn't a problem.

"Alright." School Head Mo nodded.

At that moment, an elder suddenly rushed into the room, and upon seeing the both of them, he clasped his fist and reported, "Principal Zhang, Emperor Yu Shenqing wishes to meet you. He has been waiting outside for some time now!"

Chapter 918

Bodhi Seed

"Yu Shenqing?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

Why was the other party looking for him?

School Head Mo pondered for a moment before explaining with a smile. "Principal Zhang, after you rejected his gift, he has been coming over whenever he's had time these past few days, requesting to meet you. No matter how we tried, we weren't able to stop him. My guess is that he probably fears that he has gotten on your bad side unwittingly."

Principal Zhang had caused a huge ruckus during the inauguration ceremony, be it the congratulations from the thousands of beasts, the public lecture that had made him a half-teacher to almost everyone in the academy, or winning the recognition of every single person at the inauguration ceremony.

Just from these feats, it was apparent to anyone who had been at the inauguration ceremony that Principal Zhang would become an extremely powerful person in the future. As such, many powers had sent valuable gifts in the hope of winning his favor.

Yu Shenqing had also done the same as well, but... who would have thought that the other party would turn down his goodwill? He couldn't help but recall how he had chased the other party out during his daughter's birthday, and shivers ran down his spine...

With such a history, there was no way Yu Shenqing could remain idle!

"Let's go and take a look!" Understanding the logic behind this matter, Zhang Xuan nodded and made his way over.

The reason he didn't accept the other party's gift was because he didn't feel that it was right to be taking advantage of the other party. After all, despite what he had done for the other party, he had taken a peek at the other party's soul cultivation techniques and made use of their Bodhi Saint Tree, so he considered the both of them equal.

But if his act had left the other party misunderstanding his intention, that would truly be horrible.

Soon, they arrived at the reception hall where the principal usually hosted his guests and saw Yu Shenqing seated with an anxious expression.

Accompanying Yu Shenqing were three middle-aged man, and two of them, for some reason, dared not sit down and were standing at the back with pale faces.

Zhang Xuan didn't recognize the two middle-aged man standing behind, but the person sitting next to Yu Shenqing was a familiar face. It was the man who had gifted him his manor, King Huai.

"Your Majesty, King Huai!"

Even though it was out of consideration of his ties with Yuan Tao, it was a fact that the other party had done him a huge favor while he was still in a humble position, so he had quite a favorable impression of the other party.

"Paying respects to Principal Zhang!"

The four of them got their feet and clasped their fists.

The four of them represented the pinnacle of authority within Hongyuan Empire, but nevertheless, their standing was still beneath that of the principal of the Master Teacher Academy.

"There is no need to stand on ceremony." Zhang Xuan waved his hand before making his way over to the main seat.

After which, he turned to King Huai and asked, "Your Highness, I should have paid you a visit long ago to thank you for your generous gift. For you to have come here instead, I am truly embarrassed."

"Principal Zhang, there is no need for that!" King Huai hurriedly bowed politely.

"When I first met you, I already knew that you are a capable person who is bound for great things. But nevertheless, I didn't expect you to become the principal of the Master Teacher Academy so quickly," King Huai remarked meaningfully.

When he first met Zhang Shi, he hadn't thought much of the other party. It was only due to the latter's relationship to Yuan Tao, a member of a Sage Clan, that he thought of striking up a close relationship with the latter.

But who could have known that, in a short span of less than two months, a seemingly insignificant Consonant Spirit realm figure who had no backing or connections in Hongyuan City would rise to become the most powerful person in the Master Teacher Academy?

It was truly inconceivable that things would develop in such a manner.

"Your Highness, you are too polite," Zhang Xuan replied with a smile. "If you don't mind, why don't you show me a move or two?"

"Show you a move or two?" King Huai was stunned for a moment before ecstasy crept across his face.

To be saying such words, it could only mean that the other party was intending to offer him some pointers!

While the other party's cultivation was currently still beneath him, considering how the other party could even enlighten donkeys and roosters through his lecture, his teaching was surely something that no ordinary 6-star master teachers could compare to.

If he could receive the pointers of a person like that, he would surely be spared from many years of fumbling around.

"It will be my pleasure!" King Huai replied excitedly.

He quickly walked over the center of the reception hall and began executing a battle technique.

As soon as he made his move, his cultivation became apparent. Just like School Head Mo and the others, he was at Saint realm 1-dan pinnacle as well.

It didn't take too long for him to finish executing his battle technique. He swiftly returned back to his position, standing upright as if a student before his teacher.

A moment later, he heard the impassive voice of the young man ahead of him.

"Your Highness, your mastery of the Fleeting Water Fist Art is indeed impressive. However, have you been suffering from poor blood circulation recently and occasional bouts of weakness?"

"This... How do you know?" King Huai was astonished, and his body stiffened slightly.

He had indeed been suffering from poor blood circulation recently, and his zhenqi hadn't been flowing as smoothly as before. However, he had made sure to conceal the news well, not telling anyone at all. As such, even Yu Shenqing was oblivious to his ailment.

After all, given the prestigious position he was in, there were many who desired to take his place. If it was made known that his physical condition wasn't in the best of states, it might just stoke some of the more ambitious individuals into action, thus bringing unnecessary trouble to him.

Yet, for the other party to notice the issue from a single battle technique, just how formidable was his eye of discernment?

On the other hand, instead of replying, Zhang Xuan continued speaking with a smile. "If I am not mistaken, it is caused by an injury you suffered in the past, right?"

The reason King Huai was able to hold such an esteemed position was due to the many contributions he had achieved for the country on the battlefield when he was younger. However, in the midst of doing so, there were several occasions when he sustained severe injuries that threatened to claim his life.

The trauma was probably left from back then.

"That's right!" King Huai replied with a nod.

"I have a gourd of fine wine here. Drink it and circulate your zhenqi according to the cultivation technique I am about to impart to you, then your trauma will be resolved. Work hard, and you might just be able to achieve a breakthrough in your cultivation!"

Chuckling softly, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and handed a gourd over to King Huai. After which, he took out a piece of paper and a brush and swiftly wrote down a cultivation technique.

Even though his cultivation was only at Half-Saint primary stage, he had read through

all of the books within the Master Teacher Academy's Cultivation Compendium, which had granted him a deep understanding of the Saint 1-dan and Saint 2-dan realms.

As such, it was a walk in the park for him to come up with a cultivation technique aligned with the other party's constitution.

"Thank you, Principal Zhang!" King Huai said before taking a look at the cultivation technique he had just received.

With just a look, his eyes narrowed, and his body began trembling non-stop.

Given his eye of discernment, he could easily tell that this cultivation technique was far more advanced than the royal family's cultivation technique, which he was currently practicing. On top of that, it was aligned with his constitution!

If he were to cultivate it seriously, not only would he be able to resolve his trauma, there was a very high chance that he could overcome his current bottleneck and reach higher realms!

He had only given the other party a manor, but in exchange, he had received a cultivation technique that he could pass on to his offspring and descendants...

He had truly struck it rich!

"This..." Yu Shenqing and the other two glanced at one another and shook their heads.

They didn't know what was written in the cultivation technique, but for the usually composed King Huai to get so agitated, that could only mean that it was extraordinary.

If only they'd also had the foresight to get close to Zhang shi before he became the principal! To do so now... it was already too late!

"There is no need to stand on ceremony!" Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

It was just a normal cultivation technique, not a simplified version of the Heaven's Path Divine Art. It wasn't anything much at all.

This served as his compensation to the other party for gifting him the manor, so they could be considered equal now.

After dealing with King Huai's matter, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze to Yu Shenqing and asked, "Your Majesty, may I know the reason behind your visit?"

Yu Shenqing hurriedly got to his feet and replied, "Principal Zhang, there are two reasons behind my arrival..."

"Oh?"

"You are the benefactor of our Yu Clan. Not only did you impart my daughter a set of soul cultivation techniques, you even treated the Bodhi Saint Tree. I am truly grateful to you. It would be truly unbecoming of me if I didn't repay the favor!" Yu Shenqing hurriedly spoke up.

The other party's refusal of his gift had left him jittery, so he had decided to pay the other party a visit to hand it over personally.

"You are too polite," Zhang Xuan replied courteously.

"I know that Principal Zhang is not a person who is interested in material gains... This is the only Bodhi Seed that the Bodhi Saint Tree has borne over all these years. I hope that you can accept this gift!" Yu Shenqing flicked his wrist and presented a jade box.

He opened the box, revealing a round seed within.

"Bodhi Seed?" Zhang Xuan frowned questioningly.

What was this thing used for?

Despite the many books that Zhang Xuan had read, there didn't seem to be anything regarding Bodhi Seeds.

"As long as you plant and nurture it well, it will grow into another Bodhi Saint Tree. Cultivating under the tree can help to calm one's mind, thus enhancing one's rate of cultivation while decreasing the chances of one's cultivation going berserk. On top of that, it has mystical effects for those who cultivate the soul," Yu Shenqing quickly explained.

"It can be used to grow a Bodhi Saint Tree?" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

He was rather interested in the Bodhi Saint Tree after seeing its prowess in nourishing

Wei Ruyan's soul quickly. If he could obtain one and cultivate his soul within it, his soul cultivation would surely rise swiftly as well.

"Un!" Yu Shenqing nodded as he passed it over. "Since Principal Zhang was able to create such a formidable set of soul cultivation techniques, you must have a deep understanding of souls as well. I believe that this should be useful to you, so please do accept it!"

Zhang Xuan took the box and nodded. "Thank you for your gift!"

He would have probably turned it down if it was anything else, but it just so happened that he had a use for the Bodhi Seed.

He could plant it within the Myriad Anthive Nest and bring it around with him so that his soul could cultivate in it whenever he had the time to do so.

On the other hand, seeing Zhang Xuan accept his gift, Yu Shenqing heaved a long sigh of relief.

After which, he gestured to the two middle-aged man behind him and said, "As for the second matter, I will leave it to you two to speak about!"

The two middle-aged man hurriedly stepped forward and clasped their fists.

"The incumbent head of Hongyuan City's Shen Clan, Shen Wanting, pays respect to Principal Zhang!"

"The incumbent head of Hongyuan City's Liu Clan, Liu Zaiyan, pays respect to Principal Zhang!"

"Shen Clan? Liu Clan?"

Zhang Xuan had heard of the Four Great Clans of Hongyuan City, but he had never had any interactions with them. Why would these two clan heads abruptly pay him a visit?

"Yes. My unfilial son must have been blind to have offended Principal Zhang, so I have come as the representative of the entire Shen Clan to apologize for his deeds."

"My son, Liu Quan, was brazen to have crossed you, so I have come here to seek your forgiveness. I will leave that unfilial son of mine for you to deal with!"

The two clan heads raised their hands, and two young men were pressed forward.

They were Shen Jun and Liu Quan, whom Zhang Xuan had met back at Yu Fei-er's birthday banquet.

At that moment, neither of them possessed the dashing appearance they had during the birthday banquet. Their faces were pummeled to the point that they had swollen up like a pig's face. Had it not been for the two clan heads introducing themselves, he would have never made the connection between the two.

There was only one word that could describe the current state they were in—miserable!

"This..." Zhang Xuan blinked his eyes in confusion.

Even though he had gotten into a verbal disagreement with Shen Jun back at Yu Fei-er's birthday banquet, there wasn't any significant conflict between them. There was no need to have gone that far!

"These two fellows actually dared to cause Principal Zhang trouble! It's our lack of discipline that has resulted in this situation, so we wish to compensate you for this matter. We ask of you to accept it!" Raising his hand, Shen Wanting proffered a storage ring with an earnest attitude.

"This..." Zhang Xuan was at a loss.

Did these two fellows cause him trouble? Why didn't he have any recollection of the matter?

Did he suffer an amnesia at some point?

Noting Principal Zhang's silence, Liu Zaiyan continued pleading anxiously. "Principal Zhang, I hope that you can accept our goodwill. Otherwise, I fear that our clans will dare not remain in Hongyuan City."

Zhang Xuan became even more bewildered.

Just what was happening?

On the other hand, seeing the earnest confusion on Principal Zhang's face, Yu Shenqing

and King Huai glanced at one another and admiration filled their minds.

Two men had tried to cause him trouble by sending men to pummel him, but he actually didn't remember the matter at all...

As expected of the principal, such trivial matters wouldn't even faze him in the slightest...

Incredible!

Chapter 919

Shen Jun Burst into Tears

Returning back to the time right after the end of the inauguration ceremony...

After watching such a thrilling inauguration ceremony, Shen Wanting and Liu Zaiyan were filled with agitation and awe.

This was especially so for Shen Wanting. As the man who wielded absolute power over the largest clan in Hongyuan City, he had a clear idea of the significance of the commotion that had occurred today.

To become the master of every single beast of the Cloudmist Ridge, and to be recognized by every single master teacher in the Master Teacher Academy... the authority the other party wielded could be said to be unmatched in Hongyuan City.

Even Emperor Yu Shenqing couldn't even come close to measuring up to the power the other party wielded!

If the Shen Clan could get on good terms with the other party, it would surely rise through the ranks and prosper for many generations to come!

Thus, he was intending to rush back to the clan to discuss with the other elders and come up with a plan to forging a close relationship with Principal Zhang, but at that very moment, his prided son was suddenly brought to him on a stretcher, severely wounded.

"What happened?" Shen Wanting's face darkened in fury.

As the head of the Four Great Clans, the Shen Clan wielded immense power in Hongyuan City. For his son, the young successor to the clan, to be pummeled like that in broad daylight, the culprit sure was brazen! Did the name of the Shen Clan mean nothing to him?

"Father, you must redress my grievance!" Upon seeing Shen Wanting, Shen Jun howled in agony with tears and snot flowing down his face.

"Regardless of who the culprit is, to dare provoke our Shen Clan, I will make sure that he pays for his action dearly even if he is a noble or a relative of the royal family!" With eyes narrowed in rage, Shen Wanting made his declaration majestically with unquestionable authority.

As the head of the number one clan in Hongyuan City, he did have the right to say such words.

"The culprit is an obscure master teacher of the Master Teacher Academy... That despicable bastard colluded with his comrades to lure me and Liu Quan into a trap, surrounding us and pummeling us viciously!" Shen Jun clenched his jaw.

He knew that there were many people involved in the attack, but as his head was covered in a gunny sack throughout the entire incident, he wasn't clear how many had participated. Of the entire attack, he only recalled endless blows raining down upon him before fainting... And when he came to once more, he was already in his current state.

"An obscure master teacher? Surrounding you and pummeling you viciously?" Shen Wanting's eyebrows shot up. "He must be tired of living to be so brazen as to provoke our Shen Clan!"

The Shen Clan was a behemoth with influence across almost every single trade in Hongyuan City. In fact, even the Master Teacher Pavilion had seven 6-star master teachers who were allied with them. There were also a couple of clan members who were 6-star master teachers as well.

As such, if the enemy was just an ordinary master teacher, the Shen Clan would still be able to deal with the other party easily. Regardless of whether it was the Master Teacher Pavilion or the Master Teacher Academy, they would still at least give this small privilege to the Shen Clan.

"What rank is he?" Even though Shen Jun had said that the other party was an obscure master teacher, Shen Wanting still felt that it was better to be safe.

"4-star!" Shen Jun hurriedly replied.

A mere 4-star master teacher, with his father making a move personally, it would only take moments before that despicable bastard was destroyed!

"A fellow of that level actually dared bully you?" Shen Wanting narrowed his eyes in rage as he flung his sleeves furiously. "What is his name? I will send our men to apprehend him this instant!"

"The name of that despicable bastard is Zhang Xuan!" Shen Jun replied with his fists clenched in excitement. With this, that fellow was a goner!

However, after hearing that name, Shen Wanting seemed to have frozen on the spot, and his face paled. Noticing the bizarre silence lingering in the room, as well as the peculiar state his father was in, Shen Jun couldn't help but ask, "Father, what is wrong? Is..."

But before he could finish his words, Shen Wanting's feet suddenly flew right toward his chest as he bellowed furiously, "To hell with you! If you want to die, go ahead. Don't drag the Shen Clan down with you!"

Peng!

Not expecting that his father would suddenly make a move on him, Shen Jun was unprepared for the kick and was sent crashing right into the wall. Huge spurts of blood gushed out of his mouth, and he nearly died on the spot.

The situation was baffling to him...

Father, I am the one who was pummeled! It is one thing if you aren't willing to get even with the other party for my sake, but to be chastising me and even kicking me because of the matter.

Furthermore, to hell with me? I am your son!

Clenching his jaws, Shen Jun said indignantly, "Father, if you don't intend to help me, I can settle the matter myself. As the eldest son of the Shen Clan, I still have the ability to deal with a 4-star master teacher easily."

No matter what, he was a person who had greatly contributed to Hongyuan Empire, a meritorious subject of the royal court. It was already a blessing for someone of his standing not to bully others, but to think that someone would dare bully him instead.

If he was really pushed to a corner, he could even pull his connections within the military to get the job done. After all, given his backing, there were plenty who would

be eager to fawn over him!

All it took to teach a 4-star master teacher a lesson was just a word from him.

"You aren't going to give up? Do you really want me to chop off your hands?" Hearing the words of his unfilial son, Shen Wanting nearly spurted blood. He hurriedly waved his hands and said, "Men, bind this fellow up and pummel him. I will punish anyone who dares hold back on him!"

"This..." Hearing the command, the subordinates in the room glanced at one another, bewildered by the abrupt command.

However, they dared not defy a direct command from the clan head. They hurried forward to tie Shen Jun now, but they didn't make a move immediately. Instead, they turned to Shen Wanting to seek his confirmation on the matter.

Seeing that his father was serious about this matter, Shen Jun uttered in disbelief, "Why?"

"You are asking me why? Do you know who the new principal of the Master Teacher Academy is?" Shen Wanting roared as his hands trembled in overwhelming rage.

"Principal? I was pummeled shortly after entering the academy, so I didn't attend the inauguration ceremony," Shen Jun said awkwardly.

Even though his father had taken him to the inauguration ceremony so as to broaden his horizons, he had been beaten up before the ceremony began, so he had no choice but to have his subordinates carry him back to the clan.

As such, he had no idea what had happened at the inauguration ceremony, and he didn't have the slightest clue who the new principal was either.

"The new principal is the 4-star master teacher you spoke of, Zhang Xuan!" Shen Wanting howled furiously before turning to the subordinates and gesturing majestically. "After pummeling him, carry this unfilial son to the Master Teacher Academy to apologize. Wait, no, he will follow me to the royal palace later on. I have to meet Emperor Shen Yuqing first!"

Given the atrocious crime his unfilial son had committed, he probably would not even be granted entry if he just went over to apologize. Thus, he could only ask Shen Yuqing

for a favor!

...

A similar scene also played out in the Liu Clan.

The bewildered Liu Quan was viciously lashed by his father, and more importantly, the latter even prohibited him from applying medicine to his wounds. As such, many of his open wounds ended up being infected, causing him great agony. At the same time, his state also became so horrifying that no one was willing to allow their gaze to linger on his body more than an instant.

If Liu Quan and Shen Jun were still indignant at how their fathers had treated him a moment earlier, after seeing Zhang Xuan naturally take the main seat in the room, drive King Huai into tears of gratefulness with just a few words, and Emperor Yu Shenqing begging him to accept the Bodhi Seed... With their wits, how could they possibly still remain oblivious to the standing of the young man before them?

The heavily wounded Shen Jun lowered his head and pleaded, "I will take responsibility for my own actions. I was the one who was insolent to Principal Zhang, so I beseech you to not implicate our Shen Clan in this matter."

"I was the one who gathered those men, this has nothing to do with the Liu Clan at all. My father was completely oblivious to my actions," Liu Quan quickly added.

After hearing those words, Zhang Xuan finally got a rough idea as to what had happened, and he couldn't help but shake his head.

To march into the Master Teacher Academy, declaring that you wish to teach me a lesson publicly... Aren't you just asking for trouble?

Even if you weren't aware that I am the principal, the strength and scale of the Xuanxuan Faction was there for all to see. You should be counting your blessings that you weren't mobbed to death!

Even though Shen Jun and Liu Quan had meant him harm, they had already gotten what they deserved. In any case, he wasn't injured in the matter either. As such, Zhang Xuan was intending to turn down the compensation, but a thought that suddenly flashed across his mind prompted him to accept the storage ring from Shen Wanting.

He was no longer an ordinary student anymore but the principal of the Master Teacher Academy. If he didn't deal with someone who had attempted to provoke him promptly, that could potentially undermine the authority of the Master Teacher Academy. Furthermore, that would also be driving the two clans into a corner.

Putting everything aside, just considering his current influence and standing, if others were to know that the Shen Clan and Liu Clan had once offended him, who would still dare do business with them?

Everyone would avoid them like the plague!

That was how society worked. One's actions must be aligned with one's standing, or else there would only be chaos.

After taking the storage ring, Zhang Xuan swiftly looked over the contents within and saw innumerable treasures.

Just looking at the high-tier spirit stones by themselves, there were already more than five hundred of them.

These two clans sure are generous! Zhang Xuan was astounded.

This wasn't a small number of high-tier spirit stones. Even the Hongyuan royal family would have to tighten their budget significantly for the next few decades if they were to take out such a sum from their treasury. The fact that the two clans were able to fork out such a sum easily reflected the extent of their strong foundations.

"The Shen Clan has businesses all over Hongyuan Empire, and they trade frequently with Qingyuan Conferred Empire as well. Over the years, they have accumulated great wealth, and in terms of liquid assets, perhaps even our royal family can't compete with them." Noticing Zhang Xuan's astonishment, Shen Yuqing discreetly sent a message through zhenqi telepathy to him.

They are even wealthier than the royal family? Zhang Xuan was truly shocked this time around.

It was no wonder Shen Jun could afford to take out two high-tier spirit stones each for him and Luo Qiqi to serve as welcome gifts. One must know that this was something that Xing Yuan and Yu Fei-er could not afford to do.

So, it turned out that he was from a truly wealthy clan; that explained everything!

Since they specialize in running businesses, and they have connections with Qingyuan Empire, perhaps I can use their help. Recalling his previous intentions, Zhang Xuan's eyes suddenly lit up.

Currently, he was severely lacking high-tier spirit stones. While he had obtained a huge pile of resources from the beasts of the Cloudmist Ridge, he didn't have the connections and means to sell them. However, if he could tap into the connections of the Shen Clan, it shouldn't be too difficult to sell his items.

In any case, it would be far easier than fumbling his way around it alone.

"I will be accepting your items then!" Zhang Xuan nodded and put away the storage ring before turning his gaze back to Shen Wanting once more. "Clan Head Shen and Clan Head Liu, I happen to have something that I may require your help on."

Shen Wanting and Liu Zaiyan's eyes lit up, and they quickly clasped their fists and replied, "Principal Zhang, feel free to speak. As long as it is something within the means of our Shen Clan and Liu Clan, we will surely accomplish it!"

Their only fear was that Zhang Xuan would have nothing to ask of them. Only when the other party had a request to ask of them would they be able to forge a strong relationship with him.

"I believe you should have seen the situation at the inauguration ceremony back then. The beasts of the Cloudmist Ridge have gifted me quite some stuff, but I don't really need most of it. Since the both of your clans have vast business connections, are you interested in selling my items for me?" Zhang Xuan revealed his motive.

"This... We are more than willing to!" Upon hearing the request, Shen Wanting and Liu Zaiyan couldn't help but burst into delight.

Considering that huge profits were involved in this dealing, the fact that the other party was willing to leave this matter to them meant that he was willing cast aside their differences and trust them.

"That is good." Zhang Xuan nodded as he passed a storage ring over.

The items that the beasts of the Cloudmist Ridge had gifted him were in it.

Even though these items were valuable, they weren't of much use to him. It would be much better for him to trade them for high-tier spirit stones to cultivate instead.

In any case, the two clans had their foundations rooted in Hongyuan Empire, so they wouldn't dare play any tricks with the Master Teacher Academy looming over them.

"These items are highly sought after regardless of whether it is within Hongyuan Empire or the other empires. Principal Zhang, rest assured, we will surely sell all of it for you within two months!" Shen Wanting said confidently.

Chapter 920

Returning to the Myriad Kingdom Alliance

Of the numerous treasures and ores in the Cloudmist Ridge, the most valuable one had to be the Cloudmist Flower.

It was a rare commodity that only grew in the Cloudmist Ridge, and even the Hongyuan royal family didn't have much of it. Thirty huge chests of high-grade Cloudmist Flowers... Without any doubt, the profits that one could derive from selling them would be nothing short of astronomical.

Truthfully, gaining the rights to sell these items in place of Principal Zhang was highly beneficial to the businesses of the two clans as well. Firstly, it would give an impression of a close relationship between the Shen Clan and the Liu Clan with the new principal, and this would further enhance their prestige. Secondly, these valuable goods could help more people learn of their name, allowing them to expand their markets further.

Even if they didn't receive a single spirit stone from the sale of the items, it was still a winning deal for them.

Naturally, Zhang Xuan was also aware of these benefits as well.

Nodding, he clasped his fist and said, "I will be counting on you then."

After chatting for a while to confirm the details regarding the sales of the goods, the four of them got up and bade farewell.

Shortly after the few of them left, School Head Mo entered the room.

"Principal Zhang, I have just finished making the arrangements. If you wish to take the 6-star master teacher examination, you just have to select a Conferred Kingdom and raise it into an empire within ten years to successfully clear the examination!"

"Within ten years?" Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan shook his head with a smile.

He wasn't intending to spend so long on the 6-star master teacher examination.

"Regarding the Conferred Kingdom... I'll choose Xuanyuan Conferred Kingdom!" Zhang Xuan said.

So far, the Xuanyuan Conferred Kingdom was the only one he had been to. Back then, he had eradicated the royal family ruling the country and installed Mo Yu as its new empress. It had been half a year since then, and he was curious about how things were going there. This was a good opportunity to head over to take a look.

"Alright!" School Head Mo nodded. "I will send a message to the headquarters now to have them dispatch a representative to Xuanyuan Kingdom!"

Zhang Xuan nodded in response.

After reading the books in the Cultivation Compendium, he had gained a thorough understanding of the Empire Building test.

While the Master Teacher Academy had the right to invigilate 6-star master teacher examinations and bestow the 6-star master teacher emblem to those who cleared the examination, it didn't have the authority to overlook a major examination like Empire Building. This was also the reason School Head Mo had to liaise with the headquarters to have them dispatch a representative.

The representative would first assess the Conferred Kingdom to confirm its existing rank and determine its eligibility to be used as the grounds for the test before the examinee was sent over to begin the test. Once the examinee felt that they had met the required criteria, the headquarters would dispatch another representative to confirm the results.

This served to eliminate the possibility of cheating.

"All in all, it should take around ten days for the representative to arrive at Xuanyuan Kingdom and inspect the area," said School Head Mo after calculating for a moment. "I think it should be fine for Principal Zhang to begin heading in ten days' time."

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded.

In any case, he still had many Heaven's Path techniques that he hadn't taken a look at. On top of that, there were also the libraries of many supporting occupations in the

Master Teacher Academy he hadn't browsed through, so he could make good use of the ten days to go through them.

Thus, over the following few days, Zhang Xuan paid a visit to the libraries of the other schools whenever he found the time to do so.

Very soon, the Beast Tamer School, Celestial Designer School, Painter School... He went through all of the libraries he hadn't been to before and collected their books in the Library of Heaven's Path.

When he wasn't collecting books, he would be spending his time going through and digesting the compiled books. By the ninth day, he finally managed to finish looking through all of them.

His comprehension of swordsmanship, spearmanship, fist arts, movement arts, and many other battle techniques had deepened considerably.

Even though his cultivation had remained stagnant within this period, his fighting prowess had been raised immensely.

If he were to meet Mu Shi's puppet once more, he could easily defeat him just by utilizing a single finger.

For a Half-Saint primary stage to defeat a Saint realm 1-dan primary stage so easily, it would definitely scare many out of their wits!

After accomplishing all of that, on the very last day, Zhang Xuan gathered Wang Ying, Zheng Yang, Liu Yang, and Wei Ruyan together and began lecturing them.

The four of them had a very deep understanding of the fields they each specialized in, and their fighting prowess was outstanding among their peers. However, in Zhang Xuan's view, they were still far too weak.

He swiftly imparted the battle techniques he had just comprehended to them and instructed them to study hard during his absence. After which, he leaped onto the back of the Byzantium Helios Beast and began making his way toward Xuanyuan Conferred Kingdom.

As he was going to be taking an examination, he didn't think that he should take his students along, especially since it would hinder their training.

...

A light breeze blew amid the drifting white clouds.

The Byzantium Helios Beast was flying straight toward Xuanyuan Kingdom whereas Zhang Xuan was currently standing within the Myriad Anthive Nest.

The cultivation of the Myriad Anthive Queen had swiftly advanced to Saint realm 3-dan over just a few short days after consuming the blood essence it was given, thus becoming even stronger than the Byzantium Helios Beast.

With its current strength, as well as a steady supply of spirit stones and various resources going to it, the diameter of the nest had already expanded to three hundred meters, giving it space similar to that of a massive stadium.

As the space in the Myriad Anthive Nest continued to expand, Zhang Xuan decided to put in the nine saint beasts had tamed at the Cloudmist Ridge as well. At the same time, he asked for some building materials from Yu Shenqing and had the nine of them work together to construct a residence.

Even though it wasn't as exquisite as the manor he had in Hongyuan City, it was still pleasing to the eye and comfortable to stay in.

However, the reason Zhang Xuan had entered the Myriad Anthive Nest wasn't to rest in the residence. Instead, he walked to the center courtyard and examined the verdant seedling that had sprouted from the ground.

The Bodhi Seed!

Zhang Xuan had planted it within the Myriad Anthive Nest on the day he received it, but to the current day, it had only barely begun to sprout.

Let me see if I can speed up its growth...

It was only a seed previously, so Zhang Xuan's means wouldn't work on it. However, now that a seedling had sprouted, he could finally start working on it!

Zhang Xuan placed his finger on the seedling and began pumping Heaven's Path zhenqi into it. At the same time, he also sprinkled a few droplets of Earth Vein Spirit Essence on it intermittently.

Tzzzzzzz!

The seedling absorbed the spirit essence and zhenqi swiftly, and it began to grow at a pace visible to the eye.

The combination of Earth Vein Spirit Essence and Heaven's Path zhenqi was not only effective on spirit herbs but saint herbs as well.

In less than an hour, it had already grown to around three-meters tall, and its trunk had widened to around the width of a human arm, too.

While it was still significantly smaller than the Bodhi Saint Tree in the royal palace, Zhang Xuan had no doubt that it wouldn't take long before it surpassed the latter under his infusion of spirit essence and zhenqi.

Retracting his zhenqi, Zhang Xuan took another look at his work and smiled in satisfaction.

His soul had yet to reach Transcendent Mortal 9-dan, but with the aid of the Bodhi Tree and the Bluehorn Dragon Beast, he might be able to achieve a breakthrough very soon.

Just as Zhang Xuan was about to draw his soul out to cultivate, he suddenly heard the Myriad Anthive Queen's voice echoing within the area.

"Master, the Byzantium Helios Beast has suddenly stopped in midair. It seems like someone has blocked our passage!"

"Blocked our passage?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

He swiftly left the Myriad Anthive Nest to take a look.

The Myriad Anthive Nest was a folded space, and with his current capability, he was still unable to perceive the happenings outside from within. However, as the creator of the folded space, the Myriad Anthive Queen was able to keep tabs on the surroundings of the nest and report any anomalies to him.

Walking to window, Zhang Xuan saw Luo Qiqi, Yu Fei-er, Hu Yaoyao, and Dong Xin outside.

"Zhang shi, we hope to follow you to Xuanyuan Conferred Kingdom to lend you a hand..."

"How did you manage to catch up with me?" Zhang Xuan asked curiously.

It had been an hour since the Byzantium Helios Beast set off from Hongyuan City, and given its speed, there was no way the aerial spirit beasts that the others were riding on could catch up with him. Since that was the case, how had they gotten ahead of him?

"We learned that Principal Zhang is going to take the Empire Building test in Xuanyuan Conferred Kingdom, so we decided to wait for you here so that you won't be able to chase us away!" Hu Yaoyao replied with a smile.

With her influence as the leader of the Bewitching Devil Faction, it wasn't too difficult for her to dig up this piece of information, especially since Zhang Xuan hadn't bothered to conceal the news.

"Ah... Alright then." Seeing that the group before him was determined to tag along, Zhang Xuan eventually nodded.

As the Empire Building test was his 6-star examination, he wasn't supposed to engage the help of other master teachers. However, as long as it was nothing significant that would affect the whole situation, the others could still assist in miscellaneous matters.

With their assistance, he should be able to clear the test faster than he had anticipated.

"Let's go together then." Without any hesitation, Zhang Xuan beckoned for the others to come over, and Luo Qiqi and the others leaped onto the back of the Byzantium Helios Beast with delighted smiles.

Before long, the group was on their way to Xuanyuan Kingdom once more.

The four intruders, Luo Qiqi, Yu Fei-er, Hu Yaoyao, and Dong Xin, were top beauties of the Master Teacher Academy, and their presence felt as if spring had fallen within the stuffy room. As if flowers had bloomed in the area, a light fragrance drifted in the air, sending one's heart beating in excitement. However, it was a pity that Zhang Xuan was a blockhead, and his eyes saw nothing but cultivation and more cultivation.

All that he spoke of with those ladies was regarding only cultivation as well.

This left them extremely frustrated and helpless.

But while the interactions were boring, Zhang Xuan's knowledge and means were indeed far beyond them. Within just three short days of flight, all of them had managed to achieve a breakthrough.

This was especially so for Luo Qiqi and Yu Fei-er. The rate at which they had advanced their cultivation was indeed astonishing, having reached Chrysalis realm primary stage.

Zhang Xuan had focused his effort more on Hu Yaoyao, so the latter had made substantial improvements too. Even though she was still at Half-Saint primary stage, her comprehension of cultivation and battle techniques had deepened significantly, enhancing her fighting prowess by at least twofold!

With her current strength, it was doubtful whether Xue Zhenyang, Long Cangyue, and Dong Xin combined would be a match for her.

In fact, Zhang Xuan was confident that she could even stand her ground against the Half-Saint Lu Cheng too.

Of course, if she wished to defeat the latter, she would still have to first fully digest what she had learned over the past few days and reinforce her cultivation further. Nevertheless, it was already unbelievable to her that she had gained such strength within just a few days.

As for Dong Xin, Zhang Xuan had also offered her some pointers for her cultivation. While her improvement wasn't as substantial as Hu Yaoyao's, her fighting prowess had also been raised considerably.

In truth, the four of them had tagged along, thinking of this as a leisure trip to Xuanyuan Kingdom. They hadn't expected to receive such a benefit on top of that, and they couldn't help but be excited by their new gains.

While offering the others some guidance on their cultivation, Zhang Xuan had also spent his spare time reinforcing his Half-Saint cultivation further.

As his cultivation usually came with a huge commotion and was quite an eye-catching, he didn't attempt to make any breakthroughs during the journey. Instead, he spent his time studying the books regarding painting, mechanisms, and battle techniques, and

unknowingly, his state of mind seemed to have undergone an evolution too.

It was commonly said that painting would help to expand one's mind, bringing one enlightenment and calmness.

At this very moment, Zhang Xuan had already achieved a proficiency comparable to a 7-star painter.

What did that mean?

As long as he had sufficient zhenqi in his body, with just a brush in hand, he could produce millions of spirit beasts and soldiers that could easily devastate a Conferred Kingdom.

That was the fearsome might that a 7-star painter wielded!

Beyond 6-star, all supporting occupations, regardless of which, would be able to draw astonishing power that would be unwise for anyone to underestimate.

...

Half a month later...

Standing by the windows, Luo Qiqi took a glance beneath and said, "The Myriad Kingdom Alliance is right ahead. Zhang shi, do you want to take a look?"

"Myriad Kingdom Alliance?" Zhang Xuan smiled. "Sure. Let's descend to take a look!"

It had been four months since he had departed from the Myriad Kingdom Alliance. Since he was passing by, he should naturally head down to take a look.

After all, it was through the Master Teacher Tournament held here that he had gained the qualification to enter the Master Teacher Academy and become the esteemed person he was today.

Chapter 921

Zhang Xuan's Valiant Stature

Hearing the command, the Byzantium Helios Beast began descending to the ground, and before long, the group was already standing outside the square in front of the Alliance Head Residence.

In that very square, he had clashed with geniuses from over twenty other empires in the Master Teacher Tournament to vie for the right to enter the Master Teacher Academy. Even though it had only been a short few months since then, everything felt very nostalgic, as if it had happened a lifetime ago.

Young and reckless then, he had defeated all of his opponents with overwhelming might, creating a legend in his wake... But now, he was much more composed and mature.

Taking a look at the massive square before her, Luo Qiqi asked in curiosity, "Did Teacher come from here?"

In her view, her teacher was an incredibly talented person. Even among the younger generation of the Sage Clans, there were very few who could compete with him.

It was truly hard to believe that such an outstanding figure came not from a prestigious clan but from such a humble place.

This square was large, yes, but compared to the sacred mountains and blessed lands that Sage Clans dominated, it was nothing at all.

Putting aside everything, even the spiritual energy in the air was extremely thin. A month of cultivation at the Master Teacher Academy could easily equal several years of cultivation here.

Seemingly seeing through the thoughts Luo Qiqi harbored, Zhang Xuan simply replied with a silent smile.

If he hadn't gained possession of the Library of Heaven's Path, he would probably have

idled his life away in the humble Tianxuan Kingdom, too.

In life, however, there were no ifs. From the moment he gained possession of the Library of Heaven's Path, his life had already changed.

Leaving the Byzantium Helios Beast to wait in the sky, Zhang Xuan and the others began making their way through the street and toward the square.

At this very moment, the square was bustling with a crowd. Many cultivators were staring intently at a massive statue erected at the center of the square with fervent gazes.

"What are they doing?" Zhang Xuan was perplexed.

The square was in proximity to the Alliance Head Residence and the Master Teacher Pavilion, so it had always been quiet. Why would a crowd suddenly gather here all of the sudden? Was there a riot going on?

"Look, look! That's Zhang shi!"

"He is indeed dashing and handsome, just like how I dreamed he would be!"

"Of course, Zhang shi is my idol, you know. The greatest wish in my life is to achieve a ten thousandth of his greatness!"

"Hah, your idol? More like everyone's idol! There is no one in this square who doesn't respect and admire Zhang shi!"

"Indeed! I heard that Zhang shi has gone to the Master Teacher Academy. Ah, how I wish for him to return and conduct a lecture for us..."

"Hearing Zhang shi's lecture is the dream of countless in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance... Well, who asked you to be absent the previous time he held a lecture?"

"Am I talking to you?... Wait, I remember that you weren't around for the lecture either, isn't that so?"

...

Before even arriving at the square, Zhang Xuan could already hear the discussions of

countless young men and women as they gazed toward the center of the square with eyes sparkling in admiration and fists clenched in agitation.

Hearing the discussions of the crowd and noting the key phrase 'Master Teacher Academy', Luo Qiqi couldn't help but step forward and ask a young man, "Excuse me... May I ask, who is the Zhang shi you spoke of?"

"You don't even know Zhang shi? Aren't you too behind the times..."

Shocked to hear that there was actually someone who hadn't heard of Zhang shi's name, the young man turned around to reprimand the person who had asked the question. However, the moment he saw Luo Qiqi's face, he abruptly froze, and his face flushed crimson in nervousness. "Ah... You were the one who asked the question? Zhang shi's name goes by a single character, 'Xuan'. He is the greatest master teacher to have walked out from our Myriad Kingdom Alliance in its entire history..."

Luo Qiqi's beauty was sufficient to make any man fall at her feet. To be able to speak coherently without stuttering in her presence, the young man's self-control was not bad.

"Xuan 1, as in the character synonymous with hanging?"

Hearing that he was actually the man the crowd was talking about, a bizarre expression surfaced on Zhang Xuan's face. After receiving the other party's confirmation, he couldn't help but ask, "Zhang Xuan, he... when did he become your idol?"

It had already been several months since he had left, so any hype regarding him should have died down by now. Why would they still be talking about him?

On top of that, idol? Greatest master teacher? What was going on?

But as soon as Zhang Xuan asked that question, a loud bellow sounded from the distance.

"Audacious! How dare you address Zhang shi's name directly and speak such disrespectful words? Where did you find the guts to do so?"

Following which, a young man strutted over proudly.

With an appearance of sixteen or seventeen, the young man was dressed in extravagant clothes, and he commanded a powerful presence. With just a look, it was clear that he was a person of high standing.

Due to his loud exclamation, he immediately caught the notice of the crowd, and gazes swiftly turned to him to see what was going on. Their eyes only lingered on Zhang Xuan for an instant before turning to the four beautiful ladies beside him.

Yu Fei-er, Luo Qiqi, Hu Yaoyao, and Dong Xin... They were top-notch beauties; any man would smile even in his dreams if he could bring one of them home. For four to appear simultaneously and with a young man beside at that, it was no wonder they would spark the curiosity of the crowd.

"The Eighth Prince is a well-known playboy. He must be trying to show off before those beautiful ladies so as to win their fancy!"

"But that young man was also asking for it. If he hadn't done anything, the Eighth Prince would have had no reason to start anything either. Yet, he was actually so brazen as to call Zhang shi by his name in public... I truly wonder where he found the guts to do so!"

"Zhang shi is the idol of countless youths in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance. This is especially so for the Eighth Prince; he views Zhang shi as a goal to strive for. Yet, that fellow actually dared to ask if the 'Xuan' character referred to the one synonymous with hanging... Hanging your head! He sure doesn't know to watch his tongue; he deserves it!"

"Who can he blame when he is the one who is seeking death?"

After learning what had happened, cold sneers emerged on the lips of the crowd as they watched the commotion intently.

The young man was the eighth son of Alliance Head Zhao, Zhao Feiwu's younger brother, and he was only sixteen this year.

Despite his young age, his reputation in Myriad Kingdom City was appalling.

Lustful, domineering, arrogant, short-tempered... He had committed many atrocities in Myriad Kingdom City, disappointing his father and sister time and time again.

A few months ago, however, after being reprimanded by his sister once more, he suddenly declared that he would take Zhang shi as his role model and cultivate diligently in hopes that he would become a powerful expert like the other party. Due to his great admiration for Zhang shi, he detested anyone speaking badly about the latter.

Yet, the fellow before him actually asked if the 'Xuan' character in Zhang shi's name was the one synonymous with hanging. This was blatant disrespect for Zhang shi! It was no wonder he flew to a rage. On top of that, the four beauties around Zhang Xuan reminded him of the playboy he used to be, and that further stoked his irritation.

All of a sudden, someone amid the crowd exclaimed in astonishment, "Wait a moment... Is it just me, or does that young man look... a little familiar?"

"I also think that he looks quite familiar, like I have seen him somewhere before. But I just can't put my finger on it."

As soon as someone uttered those words, a few voices of agreement echoed among the crowd, and frowns began emerging on the faces of many.

Rendered speechless by the explosive outburst of the young man before him, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but shake his head. "Disrespectful? How was I disrespectful? Is the name 'Zhang Xuan' not meant for anyone to speak of?"

He had never thought that a day would come when it would be a taboo for him to even say his own name. Faced with such a situation, he didn't know whether he should laugh, cry, or rage.

"Of course, it is not meant for anyone to speak of! It is one thing if you had been disrespectful on a normal occasion, but do you know what day it is today?" The young man's eyes narrowed in hostility.

"What day is it?" Zhang Xuan asked curiously.

So, whether he was allowed to call his own name was dependent on the day too?

Hearing that the young man had no idea what day it was, the young man immediately erupted in fury. "Today is the day that Zhang shi's sculpture was erected in this square! As a citizen of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, you don't even know this? Have you been living under a rock?"

The crowd was also perplexed by the reaction of the young man before them. Even if he didn't know what day it was, he should have noticed the crowd in the square! It was such an important occasion for the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, and yet he actually said that he was unaware of it. Was he intentionally demeaning the alliance, or was this his way of expressing his dissatisfaction with it?

"The day that Zhang Shi's sculpture was erected?" Stunned, Zhang Xuan immediately turned his gaze to the sculpture.

He had only shot it a passing glance earlier, not thinking much of it. Taking a closer look now, he noticed that the man depicted in the sculpture was dressed in a master teacher robe. A hand of his was placed behind his back while the other hand was holding onto a brush. His eyes were directed toward the sky, as if peering through the fabric of the world itself. He carried a powerful disposition, which left one not daring to look at him directly.

Beneath him, serving as his mount, was a phoenix with its wings spread, seemingly ready to soar into the sky and venture into the depths of heaven.

That's me? Zhang Xuan's eyelids and mouth began twitching uncontrollably. Isn't he a bit... different!

The sculpture in the square had a towering stature, and the material used was also extremely rare. It was an excellent work of art no matter which aspect of it one looked at it from, clearly having come from a master sculptor...

However, there were still some differences in his appearance, especially in his disposition. The sculpture felt too tall and majestic, which made it seem unlike him instead.

Furthermore... a phoenix? When did he ride on such a thing? He had no recollection of taming a spirit beast or saint beast of this sort before!

Of the savage beasts, spirit beasts, and saint beasts he had tamed, the only one that bore even the slightest resemblance to a phoenix would be Viridescent Eagle, but... how in the world did his Viridescent Eagle transform into a phoenix?

To be soaring into the heavens atop of a phoenix, was that dignified poser really him?

This was truly difficult to swallow.

If the other party hadn't said that it was him, he would not have thought that it was modelled after him even if he were to stare at it for an entire day.

When did he become so tall and dignified?

Did they sculpt it according to Kong shi's standards?

Otherwise, that compassionate look in the eyes that seemed as if it could embrace the entire world... What the hell was that?

Zhang Xuan wasn't the only one who was shocked by this. After seeing the sculpture, the eyelids of Luo Qiqi and the others also began jerking uncontrollably. This was even more so for Hu Yaoyao, who had experienced how 'formidable' Zhang shi was personally.

How could that shameless schemer have such a majestic and dignified sculpture in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance? This was unbelievable!

Suppressing the frustration he felt, Zhang Xuan asked, "Based on what I know, the Zhang shi you spoke of isn't dead yet, right? Why did you erect a sculpture of him all of a sudden?"

Erecting a sculpture and building an ancestral shrine were things one would do only after the person in question was dead. Given that he was still alive, why were they doing this?

"You dare to curse Zhang shi?"

As soon as the young man heard those words, his body trembled in anger. "Zhang shi's lecture has benefitted millions in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, and all of us view him as our esteemed teacher... We have erected a sculpture of him so that we can pay respect to him. Do you have a problem with that?"

"Lecture?" Zhang Xuan was stunned.

It was at that moment that he suddenly recalled the lecture he had conducted right after the Master Teacher Tournament ended. At the very end, he even drew a phoenix and flew away on it...

Was this sculpture modelled after that scene?

If that was the case, that would explain the phoenix he was riding on. However, he only did it back then because he thought that it would look good and boost his reputation. Who could have known that the others would take it for real and sculpt him in such a manner?

Wasn't this taking it too seriously?

Zhang Xuan felt deeply distressed.

Was he to tell them that he wasn't as great as they thought him to be? But that would be as good as slapping his own face!

However, if he chose not to say anything, he would feel ashamed for holding onto this undeserving title.

Ah, what a dilemma!

Chapter 922

Meeting Zhao Feiwu Once More

After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan decided it would be better not to say anything.

To a master teacher, on top of their ability to impart knowledge, reputation was extremely important as well. Since he had built up considerable prestige with his previous lecture, there was no reason for him to ruin it. After all, for the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, his name could serve as a symbol to unify its citizens, as well as a powerful figure to deter conflict.

Naturally, it would also be beneficial for him to have such a reputation as the principal of the Master Teacher Academy, and it would aid in his 6-star master teacher examination as well.

Seeing how the person before him was refusing to show the slightest respect to Zhang Shi's sculpture, even showing a conflicted expression as if to mock it, the young man furiously issued a command. "This fellow dared disrespect Zhang Shi; I suspect that he is a spy from some foreign power. Men! Apprehend him and interrogate him well!"

"Yes!" The guards following behind him swiftly rushed forward to encircle Zhang Xuan and the others.

"I wasn't trying to be disrespectful..." Realizing that his explanation was unlikely to work, Zhang Xuan shook his head. He walked up to the young man, fondled his head, and asked with a smile, "Where is your elder sister Zhao Feiwu? Ask her to come over to meet me..."

Was there something wrong with that fellow's head, or was he simply that slow? The Eighth Prince of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance had already ordered for his apprehension, but not only did the other party not show the slightest bit of fear, the other party had even walked forward to fondle his head. Not to mention, to directly call his sister by her name and order her to meet him... Unforgivable!

"Audacious! How dare you call the alliance head by her name alone? Just how brazen

can you get..." Roaring furiously, the young man could no longer hold himself back anymore and sent a fist straight toward Zhang Xuan.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan didn't bother dodging at all. Instead, he pushed the other party's head lightly, and the other party's fist wasn't able to reach him at all due to the difference in arm length, thus rendering the prince powerless regardless of what he did.

"What are the rest of you waiting for? Get him!" Seeing that his attack had been stopped in such a humiliating manner, the young man felt so enraged that he could lose his mind. He immediately issued an order to the guards furiously.

It was also only after hearing the order that the guards jolted out of their dazed state. They immediately tried to rush forward to help, but to their horror, they found that they were unable to move their bodies at all, as if they had fallen into a marsh of some kind.

The party behind that was Hu Yaoyao and the others.

With their prowess, discreetly dealing with a bunch of guards who hadn't even reached Zongshi realm 1 was a walk in the park.

"Oh? Zhao Feiwu became the alliance head?" Surprised, Zhang Xuan asked with a chuckle as he stared at the young man who was busy flinging his fists forward but was unable to hit him.

From what he remembered, Zhao Feiwu was a knowledgeable and sharp-witted lady, but due to her affliction from birth, she wasn't able to cultivate.

Even though Zhang Xuan had resolved her problem of being unable to cultivate before leaving, she should still be some distance away from achieving the strength required to become the highest leader of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance!

One must know that in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, without the strength of a Transcendent Mortal, it was impossible to become one of the top officials, let alone the alliance head!

"Let me go, or else I will definitely have you killed!" the young man roared with clenched teeth, not bothering to answer Zhang Xuan's question.

"Forget it, I won't be able to get the full story out of you anyway; I will ask her personally then!"

Knowing that things would only get more complicated at this rate, Zhang Xuan raised his gaze toward the Alliance Head Residence and said, "Princess Feiwu, won't you come out to meet an old friend?"

His voice wasn't loud, but with his prowess as a Half-Saint, his words still easily reached the ears of every single person in Myriad Kingdom City.

"Zhang shi?"

While others didn't think much of the voice, an excited voice sounded from within the Alliance Head Residence. Following which, Alliance Zhao Feiwu abruptly emerged from the residence on the back of an aerial spirit beast, heading toward the square.

Even before the spirit beast could descend, the young lady had already leaped down to the ground. She rushed forward excitedly, wanting to give the young man before her a warm hug. However, at the final moment, she hesitated and clasped her fist instead. "Feiwu pays respect to Zhang shi!"

"Zhang shi?"

"For Princess Feiwu to act so respectfully toward him, could he be... that Zhang shi, Zhang Xuan?"

"Now that you mention it, he does seem to bear some resemblance to the sculpture in the center of the square."

"It's not just 'bear some resemblance'; they are the same person! How could we have failed to recognize Zhang shi?"

"He looks much more medio... magnificent than his sculpture!"

"Indeed, magnificent is the word I was thinking too."

...

Zhao Feiwu's words and actions had caused a huge commotion in the square.

Everyone turned to the young man at the center with eyes lit up in excitement.

Even the Eighth Prince, who had just ordered for Zhang Xuan's apprehension a moment ago, was completely dazed, and he looked as if he was going to lose his mind.

He had always regarded the latter as his idol, but to think that, not only would he fail to recognize the other party in person, he would even act so disrespectfully. The more he thought about it, the more ashamed he felt of his actions. If only there was a burrow in the ground at this very moment, he would have dived right in.

"Let's head to the Alliance Head Residence to speak!" Noticing the fiery gazes around them, Zhao Feiwu knew that they weren't in a good place to speak. Thus, she beckoned Zhang Xuan toward the residence.

"Un." Nodding, Zhang Xuan and the others leaped onto the back of the aerial spirit beast and headed toward the Alliance Head Residence.

Shortly after they left, a deafening uproar broke out amid the square, and it felt as if even the sky would fall under the din.

"So that is Zhang shi..."

"What a gentlemanly and cultured person he is! If I could marry him, my life will have been worthwhile even if I die the moment after!"

"Marry him your head! Look at the ladies beside him and Alliance Head Zhao Feiwu, which of them isn't a top-notch beauty? With your appearance, you probably aren't even worthy of serving as his maid..."

"Even if I can't become his maid, a night of pleasure is fine by me as well..."

...

Some amid the crowd had their eyes glowing in admiration while others had gone green in envy, but there was palpable excitement in the air.

Zhang Xuan had simply created far too many miracles. Becoming the half-teacher of millions of experts, he had brought the Myriad Kingdom Alliance out of its many years of oppression from the neighboring empires. As news of his sudden appearance spread, the citizens of Myriad Kingdom City began crowding the streets, curious to see

the form of the legendary genius.

...

Oblivious to the chaos in the square, at that moment, Zhang Xuan was seated in a vast hall. Sitting not too far away from him was Zhao Feiwu, who carried a faint smile on her lips.

Over the past four months since Zhang Xuan left, Zhao Feiwu had made considerable progress in her cultivation. She was still some distance away from reaching Transcendent Mortal, being still at Zhizun realm, but to have made such great progress within a limited period of time, she must have put in quite a bit of effort.

Noticing Zhang Xuan's thought, Zhao Feiwu explained, "Zhang shi, you left behind a cultivation technique manual for me before you left, and the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, Cascading Sand Sect, Frigid Gale Sect, Fleeting Cloud Sect... all of these powers have been providing me resources for my cultivation unconditionally, so it is only natural that I've made such progress within this period of time."

"Cascading Sand Sect, Frigid Gale Sect, Fleeting Cloud Sect... Those powers provided resources for your cultivation unconditionally?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

These sects had been the culprits behind the oppression of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance for so many years, so why would they suddenly change their attitude all of a sudden, supporting her instead?

"That's right. They have only made a single request of our Myriad Kingdom Alliance in exchange for their unconditional support, and that is for me to become the alliance head," Zhao Feiwu explained.

After hearing those words, Zhang Xuan immediately realized what was going on, and he couldn't help but shake his head.

Back then, before the Master Teacher Tournament, he had once appeared before those powers in Yang shi's form and killed the leader of the White Helios Sect, Bai Kaizhi, with a single book. That incident had probably instilled great fear into the leaders of the other powers. On top of that, he himself had also emerged as the champion of the Master Teacher Tournament and successfully enrolled into the Master Teacher Academy.

Even if the Master Teacher Academy was a distance away, it was inevitable that they feared he would return one day and exact vengeance on them, especially given what they had done in the past.

After receiving news that he had close ties with Zhao Feiwu, they decided to fawn on the latter, probably in the hope that she could speak up for them should they fall into a dire situation.

After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan spoke. "Since those sects and powers are willing to forge a close relationship with the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, you should send a message to inform them that I will be staying at Xuanyuan Conferred Kingdom for a period of time. During my stay there, I will be conducting public lectures, and if any of them are interested, they are free to join as well."

Since these powers intended to express their goodwill to him through supporting Zhao Feiwu, he should reciprocate their goodwill. This was essential if the Myriad Kingdom Alliance hoped to enjoy peace for many years to come.

Furthermore, what a Conferred Kingdom lacked the most was a strong foundation. As just an individual, it would be difficult for him to build a strong foundation in Xuanyuan Kingdom by himself.

The best way to do so was to draw more experts into the country. Their arrival would be closely followed by merchants, who would bring in a great amount of resources necessary for the common populace to advance their cultivation faster, thus enhancing the national power.

"Alright!" Knowing the intentions behind Zhang Xuan's instructions, Zhao Feiwu nodded with a smile. "I will also inform everyone in the alliance. You have many fans within the alliance at the moment, so they will surely follow you if they hear that you are heading to Xuanyuan Kingdom."

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but burst into laughter.

By this point, he had also figured out the reason the Myriad Kingdom Alliance had decided to erect his sculpture.

His very existence served as a deterrent factor against the 27 other regional powers, preventing them from doing anything overboard. So, of course, the Myriad Kingdom Alliance would try to glorify him as much as possible.

After chatting a while longer and learning that the Myriad Kingdom Alliance had been faring well in recent times, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. Just as he was about to rise and take his leave, Zhao Feiwu suddenly stared at him with deep anticipation.

"Zhang shi, is it fine... if I follow you to Xuanyuan Kingdom?"

"Aren't you the alliance head at the moment? Are you allowed to leave your post?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"I am only the alliance head in name at the moment. The one who is handling everything within the alliance is still my father," Zhao Feiwu replied.

"I see. You should follow along too then; I will offer you some pointers with your cultivation whenever I have time. Even though it's impressive that you have reached Zhizun realm within just a few months, it's still insufficient to hold your ground against the many powers in the region! I will try to raise your cultivation to Transcendent Mortal 5-dan or 6-dan within this period of time," Zhang Xuan replied with a nod.

In order to claim the highest position of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance stably, one had to possess a cultivation of at least Clarifying Turbidity realm. However, to become a truly unrivalled existence in the region, one would have to be at Consonant Spirit realm or Cosmos Bridge realm.

In the past, Zhang Xuan didn't have the power to achieve this. However, having reached Half-Saint and possessing many artifacts and pills in his inventory, it wasn't too difficult for him to raise Zhao Feiwu's cultivation to such a level within a short period of time.

"Thank you, Zhang shi!" Zhao Feiwu's eyes lit up in excitement after learning that the other party would help her raise her cultivation.

She didn't have much of an interest in amassing authority and power, but the fact that the other party was willing to help her showed that she meant something to him, and this left her heart tingling in joy.

On top of that, as Zhang shi continued on his journey, the disparity in their strength would only continue to widen. At this rate, they would only become two individuals living in two different worlds, unable to reach one another.

If she could grow stronger, that would mean that she would be inching even a step closer to him. Even if she couldn't catch up with him, at least the distance between them wouldn't be so great.

After dealing with the affairs at the alliance and spreading the news out, Zhao Feiwu and the others got on top of the back of the Byzantium Helios Beast and began making their way over to Xuanyuan Conferred Kingdom.

Chapter 923

6-star Master Teacher!

Two months later, in the Elder Hall of the Master Teacher Academy, Mo Zhu, Zhao Bingxu, and the other school heads were seated around a table.

Shortly after Lu Feng was stripped of his position as the head of the Apothecary School, Vice School Head Lu Qing had taken over his position. At the same time, Chen Chengxun had also stepped from his position as the head of the Formation Master School, and another vice school head had taken over it.

In other words, all ten of the school heads were gathered together.

"School Head Mo, how is Principal Zhang's Empire Building going?" Zhao Bingxu asked.

Their principal taking the 6-star master teacher examination was a major affair for the Master Teacher Academy. As such, School Head Mo had been appointed to keep tabs on the matter so that they could respond should anything major occur.

"Alright, allow me brief you all on the matter."

School Head Mo stood up and began. "The Conferred Kingdom that Principal Zhang has chosen for Empire Building is... Xuanyuan Kingdom! It is a nation beneath the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, which is the vassal state of Tier-2 Huanyu Empire."

Everyone nodded.

To be honest... they hadn't even heard of Xuanyuan Kingdom before. That was how remote and backward it was.

The Master Teacher Continent was simply too large, and there were far too many kingdoms and empires for one to remember. Despite the vast knowledge that master teachers possessed, it was impossible for them to know all of them.

They had still heard of Huanyu Empire, but they would hardly hear any news about

nations beyond that, such as the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, let alone Xuanyuan Kingdom.

To a typical 6-star master teacher, it could be considered as a backward, undeveloped plot of land.

"Principal Zhang arrived at Xuanyuan Kingdom two months ago, but he didn't announce his arrival. Instead, he immediately headed to the local Master Teacher Pavilion."

School Head Mo had kept a close eye on Zhang Xuan's every single action, allowing him to explain everything in detail. "The local head of the Master Teacher Pavilion is a 3-star pinnacle master teacher known as Luo Qianhong. He once had a conflict with Principal Zhang, and Principal Zhang crashed the Master Teacher Pavilion as a result."

"Crashed the Master Teacher Pavilion?" Everyone was astonished to hear that.

As master teachers, they understood the immense difficulty in crashing a Master Teacher Pavilion. Not only would one have to subdue every single master teacher in the Master Teacher Pavilion, they would also have to face the wills left behind by preceding master teachers as well.

Based on what they know, back when their principal was still at Xuanyuan Kingdom, he had only been a 2-star master teacher. To successfully crash a Master Teacher Pavilion then, didn't that mean that he had been superior to 3-star pinnacle or 4-star master teachers despite only being at 2-star?

"According to the rules, Master Teacher Pavilion will have to unconditionally obey the orders of the master teacher who has successfully crashed it. What did Principal Zhang order them to do after heading to the Master Teacher Pavilion?" Wei Ranxue asked.

Crashing a Master Teacher Pavilion was similar to a martial artist crashing a dojo. The loser would have to accept the punishment from the victor regardless of what it was.

"Principal Zhang didn't order them to do anything. Instead, he held a lecture for them, and within three days, both the cultivation and comprehension of the Way of Teacher of the master teachers in there were raised significantly. This was especially so for Luo Qianhong. Not only did he successfully clear the 4-star master teacher examination within this period of time, he has even advanced to 4-star pinnacle!" School Head Mo

said.

"Within three days, he actually raised the capability of a 3-star pinnacle master teacher to 4-star pinnacle?"

"Isn't this... a little— way too fast?"

The school heads were flabbergasted when they heard the news.

The reason it was hard for master teachers to advance their rank was because there were many aspects they had to improve in order to qualify for and clear each master teacher examination, such as their cultivation, eye of discernment, Soul Depth, and supporting occupations. All of this require considerable time. For Luo Qianhong to advance from 3-star pinnacle to 4-star pinnacle with just three days of guidance, this rate of improvement was unbelievable!

"Not only so, in the past, Xuanyuan Kingdom had a total of a dozen or so 3-star master teachers. However, after those three days, another eight of them has made a breakthrough to 4-star. Even though they are only at 4-star primary, that is still rather frightening!" School Head Mo said with a bitter smile.

When he first heard this news, he could hardly believe his ears. He'd had to confirm the matter several times before he could finally come to a conclusion—true geniuses were existences whom ordinary men like them couldn't hope to fathom.

"So, all in all, Xuanyuan Kingdom has nine 4-star master teachers... That is a big step forward, that it is still insufficient for a kingdom to advance to an empire," one of the school heads remarked.

It was true that the foundation required for a kingdom to advance to an empire was the Master Teacher Pavilion, but it would still take considerable time for the other aspects to rise up to the required level as well, such as the economy and the military force of the nation. With just a few 4-star master teachers, it was still infeasible to accomplish Empire Building within a short period of time.

It was for this reason that Empire Building was indubitably the hardest test of the 6-star master teacher examination.

"It's indeed insufficient, but on the tenth day that Principal Zhang arrived at Xuanyuan Kingdom, many master teachers and Transcendent Mortal experts from the

surrounding Unranked Empire, sects, and powers suddenly came flooding into the nation, joining its ranks."

"They joined Xuanyuan Kingdom?"

"Many? How many people do you mean by that?"

Everyone frowned.

One of the school heads shook his head. "A Conferred Kingdom will at least have a population of several hundred million, and the addition of a couple of master teachers and experts won't make much of a difference..."

Experts had their own pride, so it was highly unlikely that they would lower themselves to join a lower-ranked nation. After all, that would be equivalent to regressing, and it would make it harder for them to advance their cultivation and capability as well.

As such, in the school heads' view, even if some of the experts and master teachers decided to join Xuanyuan Kingdom, it was unlikely that there would be too many of them. Even at most, there would only be dozens of master teachers and several hundred experts. However, such numbers were like a drop in the ocean for a nation with a population of several hundred million, and their presence wouldn't make a significant difference.

Empire Building required the raise in the overall prowess of the nation, the average cultivation of the entire populace. This was not something that could be achieved just by a couple of master teachers and experts coming in.

"A couple of master teachers and experts you say?" Hearing those words, a bitter smile emerged on School Head Mo's lips.

"You are severely underestimating Principal Zhang's rallying ability in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance! Within just ten days, more than three thousand 4-star master teachers and a hundred thousand Transcendent Mortal experts joined Xuanyuan Kingdom."

"Three thousand 4-star master teachers?"

"A hundred thousand Transcendent Mortal experts?"

Everyone was dumbstruck.

That number of master teachers and experts... Even an average Unranked Empire wouldn't have such numbers!

"But the sudden arrival of so many experts in Xuanyuan Kingdom could potentially destabilize the nation and undermine the authority of the royal family. If they rise up and start a rebellion, how will the royal family quell the insurrection?" Jiang Qingqin asked with a frown.

Even though he usually maintained a low profile within Hongyuan Empire, he was still aware of the balance of power between the royal family, the officials, and the populace.

Considering that the arriving experts were far stronger than the officials and the royal family, how could the nation impose their laws and govern them? Should they choose not to submit, would the nation have any way of dealing with them?

One must know that in an average Conferred Kingdom, even the strongest old ancestor would only be at Transcendent Mortal 1-dan, and the emperor would only be at Half-Transcension at most, usually. The sudden influx of over a hundred thousand experts was not necessarily good news for the country.

"There is no need to worry about it; Principal Zhang already has everything thought out. After spending three days in the Master Teacher Pavilion, he spent the next seven days, before the influx of the master teachers and experts, in the Xuanyuan royal palace... Within the seven days, he raised Empress Mo Yu's cultivation to Transcendent Mortal 5-dan, and the other officials who have a close relationship with her have also reached Transcendent Mortal 2-dan or 3-dan," said School Head Mo.

To induce such an unbelievable increase in the cultivation of those within the Xuanyuan royal palace within seven days... They would have never been able to think this possible had it been in the past.

However, after witnessing the huge commotion resulting from Principal Zhang's public lecture, how innumerable animals had made the breakthrough to become savage beasts, they had come to realize that whenever he was involved, miracles were nothing more than a normal occurrence.

School Head Mo continued his explanation. "Not only that, Principal Zhang also took more than a thousand of the spirit beasts of the Cloudmist Ridge with him, and each

of them possesses a cultivation of at least Transcendent Mortal 6-dan. He has instructed them to obey the commands of no one but Mo Yu. With such a powerful hand, even an average Tier-2 Empire will dare not provoke Xuanyuan Kingdom, let more those cultivators..."

"Over a thousand Transcendent Mortal 6-dan spirit beasts? Hahaha, only Principal Zhang is capable of playing such a big hand!"

"Indeed, there is probably no one else in the world who can take out so many loyal spirit beasts so easily!"

"With the royal family wielding such a powerful force, it could be said that the security of the nation is guaranteed."

Everyone was astonished for a moment after hearing the news before nodding excitedly in approval.

Typically speaking, an average beast tamer would only have a tamed beast or two, and considering the effort he would have had to put into taming them, it was impossible for him to give his tamed beasts away to another. However, their principal had made the hundred thousand spirit beasts of the Cloudmist Ridge submit to him! As such, giving away a thousand weaker spirit beasts was truly nothing at all to him.

But while it was nothing to their principal, it was of vital importance to Xuanyuan Kingdom. In the first place, the lifespan of a spirit beast was far longer than that of a human. On top of that, the strength of each of them was far higher than the strongest expert in the kingdom. With them guarding the royal family, who would dare show the slightest disrespect to them?

School Head Mo still wasn't finished. "Shortly after the influx of experts and master teachers into Xuanyuan Royal City, Principal Zhang conducted his first public lecture. In the lecture, his voice could be heard even from a distance of several hundred kilometers away, and the cultivators of the capital benefited greatly for his lecture, with over half of them achieving a breakthrough on the spot. On top of that, his Spirit Gathering Diction has caused spiritual energy to concentrate within Xuanyuan Royal City, not dissipating even after the end of the lecture, thus turning the entire area into a blessed land for cultivation."

"Spirit Gathering Diction, Rain of the Heavenly Flowers... Principal Zhang does wield

the capability to raise the cultivation of others swiftly. With this, many powerful cultivators will emerge in Xuanyuan Kingdom very soon. However, the strength of a nation lies not only within its cultivators, but the development of the occupations as well," the head of the Painter School, Song Danqing, remarked.

In assessing the overall strength of a nation, the average cultivation of the populace was only one of the factors involved. More important was the development and prosperity of the occupations.

National power covered not only potential military might but a nation's economic development, culture, and the individual's standard of living too.

Many of these factors were intricately tied with the occupations within the nation. An empire, even if an unranked one, needed not only a powerful Master Teacher Pavilion, but the existence of a capable Painter Guild, Apothecary Guild, Blacksmith Guild, and such. Only then would they be able to attract and retain talents to further the prosperity of the nation.

"Maybe you have been too busy recently, so you didn't notice it, but on the very day that Principal Zhang left Hongyuan City, the Shen Clan and Liu Clan of the Four Great Clans announced that they would be establishing a trading branch in Xuanyuan Kingdom so as to expand their business there. As soon as that announcement was made, many huge merchants in the vassal states quickly made plans to enter Xuanyuan Kingdom as well. As a result, the number of businesses within Xuanyuan Kingdom at the current moment is on par with even some Tier-2 Empires.

"As for occupations, Principal Zhang spent the ten days imparting painting, pill forging, smithing, demonic tunes, and such occupation skills to the locals, and this has caught the attention of many occupation guilds. To date, another seven occupation have already opened a branch in Xuanyuan Kingdom," School Head Mo said.

After hearing those words, a school head couldn't help but mutter beneath his breath, "The average strength of the populace, military strength, economic development, and presence of occupations are all in place. Doesn't that mean that Xuanyuan Kingdom is already qualified to be an empire?"

These were the main indicators to determine if a nation was qualified to be considered an empire. In less than two months, their principal had induced an overwhelming change within Xuanyuan Kingdom. Could it be that... he had already completed the

Empire Building test?

School Head Mo nodded. "That's right. Twenty days ago, the headquarters sent a representative down to check on the situation in Xuanyuan Kingdom, and the reason I have called for this gathering is to officially announce the result to you all.

"Principal Zhang has successfully cleared his 6-star master teacher examination, Empire Building, and thus, from this day forth, he is officially a 6-star master teacher!"

Chapter 924

The Four Principals

"He has already cleared the examination?"

"In just two short months, he successfully raised a Conferred Kingdom into an Unranked Empire?"

"If I recall correctly, even the current record holder for our academy, Principal Mo Liuzhen, took three whole years, right?"

"Two months... that is really way too fast!"

The school heads couldn't help but be dumbstruck by the shocking revelation.

They had no doubt that their principal would clear the Empire Building test, but they hadn't thought that it would be so fast!

To clear it within two months, he had probably broken the record of the Master Teacher Pavilion!

School Head Mo nodded. "Indeed, that's really fast! At the moment, Principal Zhang should be on his way back..."

"That is good. At this rate, he should be able to make it for the Combat Master Selection," Zhao Bingxu said.

"Indeed."

As soon as the Combat Master Selection was brought up, grim faces immediately emerged in the room.

The Four Great Master Teacher Academies would gather together for the Combat Master Selection once every hundred years, and while it might seem like nothing much on the surface, there was actually strong rivalries and competition in the dark. If the principal could return in time, that would be for the best.

"Over the past two months, our Martial Arts School has managed to sieve out the top twenty of each grade to participate in the Combat Master Selection," Xu Changqing said.

The only requirement for the Combat Master Selection was superior strength. The students of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy had been fighting against one another in a selection exercise over the last two months, and finally, the twenty strongest students of each grade to represent the academy and vie with the other three academies for the slots in the Combat Master Selection had been decided.

Hearing that the results were out, Zhao Bingxu hesitated for a moment before asking, "How is the strength of our students?"

"Judging from the previous Combat Master Selections, our students are still a little weak. I fear that not many of them will be selected." Xu Changqing sighed deeply.

The Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy had always been at the bottom of the Four Great Academies. In the ten thousand years since its establishment, only 327 people had succeeded in becoming combat masters. This meant that only three to four people, on average, were selected in the Combat Master Selection each time.

Hearing that the situation was not really optimistic, Zhao Bingxu shook his head and said, "There are still a few days before the selection. Let us gather the students together and try pushing them one last time before the selection. Perhaps, we might get more of them in."

"This is the only thing we can do now." The others nodded in agreement.

The effects of last minute training were usually minimal at best, but there was nothing else they could do at this point.

The other Master Teacher Academies had 7-star master teachers to offer pointers to their candidates, and the resources they received from the Master Teacher Pavilion were also far greater. As such, most top geniuses would opt to enroll in the other three academies if they had the chance, leaving the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy with just the remaining ones. It couldn't be helped that they weren't a match for the others.

It was not sufficient to have good teachers. Without ample resources and talented students, it would be extremely difficult for the students of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy to qualify in the Combat Master Selection.

This formed a vicious cycle. After many years of being unable to achieve good results, the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy received fewer resources from the Master Teacher Pavilion, and its reputation fell as well, thus resulting in the more talented master teachers shunning the academy, which lowered the performance of the academy even further.

...

While the school heads of the Master Teacher Academy were discussing this matter, just outside Hongyuan City, a massive flying ship came to a halt.

The entire ship was nearly eighty-meters in length, and it was more than ten stories tall. All of the required facilities were on it, and from afar, it looked extraordinarily extravagant.

The front and the back of the ship were supported by eight saint beasts, each harnessing the Dragon Bloodline. Through perfect coordination among the sixteen saint beasts, they were able to bring the massive ship down without the slightest tremor.

On the deck stood two elders, who gazed at the towering city walls beneath them with a smile.

"Principal Wo, I am truly thankful for your 'Cloudcliff Flying Ship'. Otherwise, it would have taken me a fair bit of effort to reach here so quickly!" the blue-robed elder standing on the left said as he stroked his beard.

"It is only right for us, the Four Great Academies, to help one another. Besides, the Combat Master Selection is held at the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, and your Luoqing Master Teacher Academy happens to be en route from our Yunxu Master Teacher Academy, so it's no trouble at all. This is also an ideal opportunity for our students to interact with one another and learn that the world is far larger than they thought so as to reduce their complacency. Otherwise, if they stayed within the confines of the Master Teacher Academy, they would just think that they are the greatest in the world, and that contributes nothing to their growth at all," the gray-robed elder on the right replied with a smile.

Both of these elders wielded the strength of a Saint, and the aura they emanated felt unfathomable, rendering one incapable of accurately determining their strength.

On top of that, there was an emblem pinned on their master teacher robes, on which, there were seven brilliantly shining stars. From this, it was clear that they were both 7-star master teachers.

7-star master teacher, this was a height that not a single person of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy and Master Teacher Pavilion had achieved.

"Indeed. The crux to learning lies in knowing one's ignorance... The fact that these students are able to stand out among their peers in the academy and participate in the Combat Master Selection goes to show that they are incredible talents. Thus, it is inevitable that they will be complacent about their own abilities. As such, there is a need to have them know that there is always a mountain higher than the other, a person greater than himself. This will help them reach greater heights in the future." The blue-robed elder nodded.

(The full phrase is that 'Logic that is not debated is weak, and knowledge that is unspoken is unclear'.)

After a moment of silence, Principal Wo asked, "Where is Principal Wu? We have already arrived, so why is he nowhere to be seen?"

"It's not like you don't know about Wu Ran, that fellow. He is fixated on the insight that Kong shi left behind at the Saint Ascension Platform, and he even became the leader of the Saint Ascension Circle. For that, he set forth several months in advance, so he should already be in the city by now!" the blue-robed elder replied.

The blue-robed elder was the principal of the Luoqing Master Teacher Academy, Shen Pingchao, and the person he was speaking to was the head of the Yunxu Master Teacher Academy, Wo Tianqiong.

(Note: Wo Tianqiong's surname is supposed to be Wu as well, just like Wu Ran, but as both of them are Principal Wu, I tweaked the former a little to Wo so as to avoid confusion.)

The person they were talking about, Wu Ran, was the principal of the Qingzhu Master Teacher Academy, as well as the leader of the Saint Ascension Circle whom Zhang Xuan had met back on the Saint Ascension Platform.

Yunxu, Luoqing, Qingzhu, and Hongyuan. These were the Four Great Master Teacher Academies under Qingyuan Conferred Empire.

Among the four, Yunxu ranked at the top whereas Hongyuan stood at the very bottom of the list.

"Principal Wo, Principal Shen, my teacher, Wu shi, invites you over to meet him!"

While the two of them were speaking, a middle-aged man suddenly descended onto the ship and clasped his fist respectfully to them.

"See, I told you, didn't I? That fellow is sure to have long arrived before us..." Shen Pingchao chuckled softly to Wo Tianqiong before turning to the middle-aged man and replying, "We will be heading over now."

After which, he and Wo Tianqiong issued some instructions to the teachers behind them before following behind the middle-aged man and heading toward the depths of Hongyuan City.

It didn't take them too long to arrive at a huge manor.

As soon as they entered the main hall, they immediately saw Wu Ran seated within, elegantly and leisurely pouring hot water into a teapot. With just a glance, they could immediately tell that the latter was a skilled tea master.

"You old fellow, you sure are fast! Did you invite the both of us over for tea? I will just say these words beforehand, if the tea isn't good, don't expect us to drink it!" Wo Tianqiong said with a smile.

"Rest assured, I won't treat you to anything less than good tea!" Hearing those words, Wu Ran chuckled softly. "I had to pull some connections and pay a heavy price for this pot of tea, and I have been waiting for the both of you to arrive to share it with you."

As Wu Ran spoke, he poured the tea within the teapot into the small teacups by the side and offered them to Wo Tianqiong and Shen Pingchao.

The duo took the teacups, but before they could take a sip, a thick layer of mist suddenly rose from the tea, lingering around the teacup, creating a dreamy haze around it.

"What a beautiful cup of tea..." The eyes of the duo lit up in amazement.

Putting aside the flavor of the tea, just its presentation in itself already made it far

superior to most teas.

The drifting layer of mist shrouding the cup felt reminiscent of the thin mist that veiled the dawn river. Even before the consuming the tea, it had already induced relaxation and comfort within one's heart.

"I wouldn't have it any other way! This pot of tea is made from the renowned Cloudmist Flower, produced exclusively in Hongyuan Empire's Cloudmist Ridge, and it has cost me ten whole high-tier spirit stones! Furthermore, had I not pulled my vast connections, I might not have been able to purchase it at all. Even so, I was only able to obtain one liang of it. I couldn't bear to drink it all this while, deciding to wait for you two to arrive to share it with you," Wu Ran said with a smile.

(One liang = 0.125 grams)

"Just the aesthetics itself makes it well worth the price!" Wo Tianqiong smiled. "Let me try and see how it tastes!"

Chuckling softly, he took a sip, and his eyes immediately lit up in wonderment. "Good tea!"

Beside him, Shen Pingchao also sipped the tea without any hesitation, and brilliant, astounded gleams swiftly appeared in his eyes.

"Where did you purchase the tea from? Help me get some too..."

"Get some too? If I were able to do so, I would have definitely bought ten jin on the spot..."

(~5kg)

"Then... sell that one liang of tea leaves you have procured to me. I will pay double the price!" Shen Pingchao said anxiously.

He was also a person who savored a good tea. With just a sip of that marvelous tea, he had already fallen in love with it.

"Don't even think about it, I won't sell it to you no matter what price you offer! Alright, let's get to the main business at hand." Wu Ran shook his head. "Have you heard of the news regarding the old principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy?"

Wo Tianqiong sighed deeply and said, "I did. He disappeared two years ago, and to date, it is unsure whether he is alive or dead. The top seat in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy should still be empty, right?"

The principals of the Four Great Master Teacher Academies were of similar standings, and they shared an amicable relationship with one another. As such, it was impossible for them to be unaware of the disappearance of the old principal, and they had even mourned over that matter for quite a while.

"You are right that the old principal went missing two years ago. However, the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy has already found a new principal!" Wu Ran replied.

"Found a new principal? Have you looked into what kind of person he is?" Shen Pingchao asked.

"Even without intentionally looking into the matters of the new principal, there is already plenty of news regarding him going around Hongyuan City. If I tell you his deeds, I bet you two will definitely have the shock of your life!"

He had arrived in Hongyuan City just a few days ago, and considering that the news regarding the new principal was literally everywhere, it would have been hard for him not to know who the new principal was.

"Have the shock of our lives?" Wo Tianqiong and Shen Pingchao glanced at one another in bewilderment before asking, "Is the new principal very famous? Could he be a representative dispatched from the headquarters?"

"Of course not! The new principal is only in his early twenties, and he is a student who enrolled into the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy earlier this year. He goes by the name of Zhang Xuan!" Wu Ran said.

"A student who enrolled into the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy this year?"

"In his early twenties? Is this really accurate?"

The two principals were stunned, and they couldn't help but doubt their ears.

Did the entire Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy go insane all of a sudden? Or did they just give up on themselves?

A fellow who was barely in his early twenties, inexperienced, and immature, and yet they had chosen him to become their principal? Was this for real?

"Of course, this is accurate! If you don't trust me, feel free to ask anyone in Hongyuan City!" Wu Ran replied with a bitter smile. "If you underestimate the new principal just because he is in his early twenties, you will be in for a great shock. I have heard a lot about him, and to date, I still find it all inconceivable."

"Inconceivable? Interesting. Tell us!" Wo Tianqiong said.

"Principal Wo, when you inaugurated back then, you also invited the predecessors and sought their recognition, right? How much of their recognition did you receive?" Wu Ran asked out of the blue.

"I was incompetent, so I only received 45% of the predecessors' recognition. Of the hundred principals in the history of the Yunxu Master Teacher Academy, I am only ranked seventh!"

Even though Wo Tianqiong claimed that he was incompetent, the slight hint of pride contained within his voice still betrayed his true thoughts.

To receive a recognition of 45% among a hundred preceding principals meant that he had the recognition of more than forty of them. Even compared to all of the preceding principals, his record was indubitably outstanding.

After all, one only needed a recognition rate of 20% to clear this formality, and he had received more than twice that figure.

Wu Ran turned to the blue-robed elder and asked, "What about Principal Shen?"

"I only received 37% of the predecessors' recognition, failing to get into even the top ten in the history of principals in the Luoqing Master Teacher Academy. I am truly ashamed," Shen Pingchao said.

"45% and 37% are outstanding records, considering the difficulty of the formality. However, when compared to the record of the new principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, they are indeed not worth mentioning!" Wu Ran said as he subconsciously shook his head. Disbelief was reflected in his eyes.

The news he had received was simply so shocking that he found it simply impossible

to accept.

"You mean that... he has surpassed our records?"

The two principals frowned.

Chapter 925

Zhang Xuan Returns

The formalities for the inauguration ceremonies of the Four Great Master Teacher Academies were rather similar.

It was not arrogance or complacency, but their ability to impart knowledge and manage their respective Master Teacher Academies could be considered top-notch even when compared to the preceding principals in the history of their academies.

Yet, even with capabilities like theirs, they had only received 45% and 37% of their predecessors' recognition. This fully reflected the difficulty of the formality.

Even if a fellow in his early twenties were to start studying from his mother's womb, how capable could he possibly be?

Could he really be more capable than them and have received an even higher recognition from the predecessors?

"Surpassed? It is more like there is no basis for comparison at all!"

Seeing their expressions, how could Wu Ran be unaware of the thoughts going through the minds of his two old friends? He couldn't help but shake his head.

"No basis of comparison? It can't be that... he has received a recognition rate exceeding 50%?" Shen Pingchao asked with a frown.

Even at the limits of his imagination, he couldn't think of anyone achieving anything much more than that.

Those who were chosen to become the principals of a Master Teacher Academy were the geniuses among geniuses, individuals who had contributed greatly to the academy in many ways. In the first place, it was already unthinkable to have a student who had only just enrolled into the academy become the principal. Yet, could that student really have obtained more than half of the predecessors' recognition?

If that was the case, wouldn't the predecessors... be far too lacking in their judgement?

"Exceeding 50%?" Wu Ran shook his head.

Noting Wu Ran's response, Wo Tianqiong thought that the other party was denying the matter and heaved a huge sigh of relief. "Just as I thought, how could a recognition rate of 50% be achieved that easily..."

However, before Wo Tianqiong could finish his words, the other party spoke. "If it was only that much, I wouldn't have made such a fuss. The recognition rate that the new principal has achieved is... 100%!"

"100%?"

The two principals nearly spurted blood.

You must be joking with us!

Every individual had their own thoughts and preferences, and satisfying everyone, not to mention more than a hundred top-notch geniuses throughout history, was definitely impossible!

This was the reason why over the years, despite the emergence of many outstanding principals, never had there been a person who had achieved a 100% recognition rate.

Yet, a newly enrolled student who was barely in his early twenties had actually won the recognition of the hundred predecessors?

"I know that the both of you won't believe it. However, this is the truth. There is no faking it." Wu Ran sighed deeply.

When he first heard the news, his reaction had been just like the other two. His lower jaw had nearly dropped straight to the ground from shock.

Had it not been for the hundred thousand witnesses present on the scene who could verify the matter, he would have definitely thought that it was a lie!

"Since you are so certain of the matter, there should be no doubt." Knowing that his old friend wouldn't lie to him over such an important matter, Wo Tianqiong turned to look at him with a perplexed expression. "After inviting the predecessors to the

ceremonial ground, we are only granted three sentences to speak. What did the new principal say in order to win the recognition of all of the preceding principals?"

With his lips twitching uncontrollably, Wu Ran replied, "He didn't say anything much... Instead, he pummeled the wills of the predecessors instead!"

"P-pu-pummeled?" Shen Pingchao and Wo Tianqiong staggered weakly.

They had heard of principals uttering words to fawn on their predecessors, and they had also heard of principals bragging about their achievements in the hope of aweing them, but none had managed to achieve such outstanding results before. For pummeling to be so effective... When did the wills of the predecessors become so lacking in guts that they would submit to force?

"Not only so, the new principal has also obtained the complete recognition of every single teacher and student in the Master Teacher Academy, thus successfully forging the Impeccable Principal's Seal. On top of that, during his public lecture, he induced the phenomenon of countless animals, regardless of species, be it donkeys, roosters, dogs, or cats, achieving a breakthrough to become savage beasts."

Fearing that the two principals would suffer a mental breakdown, Wu Ran swiftly went through everything before they could properly muse over the implications of the matter, hoping to lessen the blow.

"Impeccable Principal's Seal..."

"Countless animals achieving a breakthrough to become savage beasts..."

Nevertheless, the blow still left the two principals dumbstruck for a very long time before they could regain their sanity. "Have you met the new principal?"

"Not yet." Wu Ran shook his head. "When I arrived, I heard that he left around two months ago for his 6-star master teacher examination, Empire Building."

"Two months? It seems like we won't have an opportunity to meet him then."

"Indeed. Considering the difficulty involved in Empire Building, even if he is a truly talented individual, it will still take him a minimum of several years to succeed."

Hearing that the new principal was in the midst of taking the most difficult assessment

for his 6-star master teacher examination, Shen Pingchao and Wo Tianqiong shook their heads in disappointment.

"Several years? There is no need for that! Based on the latest news I have received... he has already cleared the test!" Wu Ran said.

"Didn't you say that... he only left two months ago for the examination?" Wo Tianqiong's mouth twitched in astonishment.

"Indeed. He cleared the test within two months, advancing a Conferred Kingdom into an Unranked Empire," Wu Ran replied with a nod.

"..." The two principals.

Just before heading there, they had still been discussing about how the students were lacking worldly experience, and they should allow the students to interact with one another more so as to learn that there was a taller mountain, a person greater than themselves. However, after hearing all those words, they suddenly had a feeling that the ones who were lacking worldly experience were them!

It had been five hundred years since they had taken over as the principals of their respective Master Teacher Academies, and in the period of time, they had seen many different kinds of geniuses. However, they had never met one who could match that Principal Zhang's caliber!

"In the Combat Master Selection, the ones who will be assessed are the students, not the principals. The Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy might have found an outstanding principal, but from what I know, the strength of their students is still not up to par. I guess we will see the true prowess of the new principal personally then!"

"Indeed. While it is important for a principal to be a capable individually in order to win the respect of others, what is more important is his ability to bring the academy forward to greater heights. If he can't achieve that, then no matter how many predecessors recognize him or how advanced a Principal's Seal he was able to form, they would merely be for show."

Being the principal of the Master Teacher Academy wasn't a one-man show to display the extent of one's capability. Rather, it was a responsibility to manage the academy effectively so as to maximize the potential of the students. If the students were unable to meet the benchmark, the principal would have failed their job regardless of how

capable they were or how great a reputation they had accrued.

Utilizing all resources available at hand to maximize the strength of the students, that was the core responsibility that a principal had.

The Four Great Master Teacher Academies had always been in a state of rivalry, and they would be lying if they said that the emergence of such an outstanding principal in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy didn't leave them feeling pressured.

At that moment, they had all made up their minds. They would have their students perform spectacularly in the Combat Master Selection so that everyone would learn that the pride of a principal lay not in their own strength but the strength of their students.

...

While an air of rivalry was brewing within Hongyuan City, Zhang Xuan was seated atop the Byzantium Helios Beast, on his journey back to the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy.

Empire Building was indeed worthy of its title as the most difficult 6-star master teacher examination test. Even with the means he had at hand, he had still found himself overwhelmed by the many things he had to do.

Fortunately, his efforts hadn't been in vain. He had finally accomplished the task at hand.

Within the two months, using the five hundred high-tier spirit stones he had obtained from the Shen Clan and Liu Clan, he had also advanced his cultivation to Half-Saint pinnacle.

The strength he could draw from his zhenqi cultivation had also increased from the initial 60,000,000 ding to 84,000,000 ding, granting him might superior to even the 75,000,000 ding that the average Nascent Saint pinnacle cultivator wielded.

With the rise in his strength, ordinarily speaking, taking into account the 20,000,000 ding and 32,000,000 ding from his soul cultivation and physical body cultivation respectively, the maximum strength he could harness should have been 136,000,000 ding, greater than a Saint realm 1-dan cultivator.

However, things didn't go as planned.

No matter how he cultivated, his strength just wouldn't break the 100,000,000 ding bottleneck, stopping right at 99,999,999 ding.

It was as if the 100,000,000 ding was the manifestation of the difference between a Saint and a Transcendent Mortal. As long as he didn't achieve Sainthood, it would remain an unbreachable barrier.

A ding of difference demarcated the gap between a deity and a mortal.

However, even though Zhang Xuan was unable to wield strength exceeding 100,000,000 ding, the strong cultivation foundation that he had built up allowed him to crush even an ordinary Saint realm 1-dan intermediate stage cultivator easily.

More importantly, after the two months of cultivation, the zhenqi reserve he had in his body was so great that it would astound any cultivator.

Using an analogy, if the zhenqi reserve of an ordinary Half-Saint cultivator was a small pond, his would be a massive lake, at least several dozen times greater than the former.

In other words, if he were to release his zhenqi all at once, it would be comparable to that of dozens of Half-Saint pinnacle experts. Just the notion of it in itself was fearsome.

Naturally, he wasn't the only one to have achieved a breakthrough in the past two months. Luo Qiqi and Yu Fei-er had successfully advanced to Chrysalis realm pinnacle too.

Dong Xin and Hu Yaoyao had also managed to match him, becoming Half-Saint pinnacle experts themselves.

To anyone else, this rate of cultivation was inconceivable and only existed in one's dream. However, after tagging along with Zhang Xuan for so long, the four of them seemed to think of it as something perfectly normal, and they even felt that they might have been cultivating a little too slow.

In fact, were it not to reinforce their cultivation, they might have already achieved a breakthrough to Nascent Saint, swiftly approaching Saint realm!

Under his guidance, Zhao Feiwu and Mo Yu had also reached Transcendent Mortal 5-dan.

The Byzantium Helios Beast, which had been tagging along with them, through consuming the many inner cores stored in the Golden Beartiger Beast's storage ring, had also significantly advanced its cultivation, reaching Saint realm 2-dan advanced stage.

The nine kings of the Cloudmist Ridge had also achieved breakthroughs as well, reaching Spiritual Perception realm.

Two months was nothing to a cultivator, passing by with just the snap of a finger. However, it was within this seemingly short period of time that everyone around Zhang Xuan, be it beast or human, had made frightening advancements in their cultivation.

At the same time, after three months of work, the Myriad Anthive Queen had expanded the Myriad Anthive Nest to around five hundred meters in diameter. The space had also become more stable, similar to a mini world.

Many buildings had been constructed within, making it feasible to house several hundred or even a thousand men within.

The nine kings of the Cloudmist Ridge and the Byzantium Helios Beast usually lived in harmony in the nest, not interfering with one another.

Zhang Xuan's clone had also been cultivating its soul under the Bodhi Tree all along, and it had recently managed to achieve a breakthrough to Chrysalis realm.

Speaking of which, Zhang Xuan, confident in his newfound strength, had challenged his clone to yet another battle, hoping to wash away the many humiliating defeats he had suffered at the latter's hand. However, as soon as the battle started... just like the many times before, he was viciously pummeled into submission.

For some reason, even though his clone's soul cultivation hadn't increased by much within this period of time, the other party's strength had still grown by an even greater amount than his.

Because of this matter, Zhang Xuan had been frustrated for a very long time before coming to a realization.

Perhaps, from the very start, his clone hadn't been able to utilize the full extent of the unbelievable strength contained within the Nine Hearts Lotus. However, over time, as the compatibility between his clone's soul and the Nine Hearts Lotus increased, his clone would be able to draw more strength from the Nine Hearts Lotus, thus enhancing his fighting prowess.

In other words, even if his clone didn't cultivate and spent its days sleeping idly, he would still display a fighting prowess beyond one's imagination once the compatibility of his soul and the Nine Hearts Lotus became perfect!

Of course, this realization sent Zhang Xuan into another downward spiral of unhappiness.

Eventually, he could only sigh and accept it. It couldn't be helped. Since he was lacking in innate talent, he could only make up for it through diligence.

...

While Zhang Xuan was cultivating, Luo Qiqi suddenly entered the room and said, "Teacher, we have arrived at Hongyuan City. Shall we head straight to the Master Teacher Academy or..."

"We have arrived?" Zhang Xuan stood up and took a look outside before saying, "Let's head to the manor first!"

With School Head Mo and School Head Zhao in the Master Teacher Academy, there was no need for Zhang Xuan to worry about the matters there. For the time being, he was more interested to see how far Wang Ying and the others had progressed during his absence.

He hadn't brought them to Xuanyuan Kingdom alongside him for two reasons.

One, he had already taught them all they needed to know, so there was no need for them to tag along.

Two, he wanted them to learn how to become independent. In a sense, this served as a test for them. He wanted to see how far they could cultivate on their own in his absence.

In the end, they were the only ones who could dictate the route they wanted to take.

He had been by their side, supporting them, ever since the start of their journey from Tianxuan Kingdom, and it was about time for them to learn how to advance on their own.

"Alright!" Luo Qiqi nodded.

Before long, the Byzantium Helios Beast began making its descend toward a resplendent manor in the middle of Hongyuan City.

Chapter 926

Premature Commencement of the Combat Master Selection

Even though Zhang Xuan had been allocated a residence within the Master Teacher Academy with a good location and rich spiritual energy after becoming the principal, he would still spend most of his time staying at the manor outside of the academy.

In any case, the manor wasn't too far away from the academy, so he wouldn't be delayed much should any emergencies occurred. Besides, it was much quieter than the residence in the Master Teacher Academy, and his students were living in the manor, too.

Shortly after landing in the courtyard, Sun Qiang rushed forward and greeted him agitatedly. "Young Master, you are back!"

Over the past two months, this fellow seemed to have gotten even rounder. His cultivation had advanced, but not by much.

He had always been gluttonous and lazy, and it seemed like, in Zhang Xuan's absence, he'd had his fair share of good food but neglected his cultivation.

Knowing that the other party was unlikely to change, Zhang Xuan lectured him for a short moment before instructing, "Call Wang Ying and the others over."

"Yes!" Sun Qiang replied before backing away.

Not too long later, Wang Ying and the others walked into the main hall.

Over the past two months, his direct disciples had made significant advances in their cultivation. It seemed like their progress hadn't slowed just because he wasn't by their side.

Wang Ying had managed to reach Chrysalis realm primary stage whereas Zheng Yang and Liu Yang were at Ethereal Treading realm pinnacle. Even though the cultivation of

the latter two was slightly lower than Wang Ying's at the moment, Zhang Xuan could tell that they were nearing their bottleneck and were likely to make a breakthrough very soon.

Before Zhang Xuan departed, he had imparted the simplified version of the Heaven's Path Divine Art to them and gave them many pills and other resources he had received from the beasts of the Cloudmist Ridge, which could help aid the advancement of their cultivation.

As such, if their progress had been slow, they would have truly let him down.

While the three of them had made significant advancement in their cultivation, Wei Ruyan's cultivation had remained stagnant, still at Chrysalis realm primary stage as it was two months ago.

However, this was within expectations too.

Wei Ruyan had progressed simply far too quickly due to the nourishment from the massive accumulation of medicinal energy in her body. While her cultivation was at Transcendent Mortal 9-dan, it wouldn't be inaccurate to compare it to a castle in the air. If she were to cultivate carelessly, it might lead to everything crumbling down instead.

As such, before leaving, Zhang Xuan had left her a single goal—to cultivate her way up from the very bottom, Fighter 1-dan, reinforcing every single realm of her cultivation thoroughly.

Within two months, she had managed to cultivate up to Chrysalis realm primary stage. While her cultivation hadn't advanced at all, her foundation and fighting prowess had grown to become far greater than they had been when she first awoke.

She was no longer the weak person whose cultivation was propped up by the mere consumption of medicine but a real Chrysalis realm cultivator both in cultivation and fighting prowess.

"Not bad!" Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction.

Unlike the lazy Sun Qiang, at least his students were still reliable and didn't let him down.

"At this moment, some of you are at Chrysalis realm primary stage while others are swiftly approaching it. Currently, there are two routes for you to choose from."

Activating a formation to prevent any information from leaking beyond the walls, Zhang Xuan gazed at his students grimly.

"I have two sets of cultivation techniques in hand. The first one will allow you to advance your cultivation swiftly, and it won't take you too long to reach Saint realm.

"The second one will be significantly slower, and it will be difficult to cultivate too. However, if you succeed, your fighting prowess will increase manyfold, granting you extraordinary might."

The Saint Ascension Decipher was powerful, but the difficulty was steep as well. Without a resolute will, it would be impossible for one to reach the end of the path.

Zhang Xuan had no intention of forcing his student into anything. Whether to cultivate the Saint Ascension Decipher or the ordinary Heaven's Path Divine Art, he felt that this was a decision for them to choose for themselves.

After a moment of silence, Wang Ying suddenly spoke up. "Teacher, I choose the second option!"

"We also choose the second option!"

Before long, the others also spoke in agreement.

Having reached this point, an opportunity to increase one's fighting prowess manyfold didn't come easy. They were reluctant to miss it.

"Choosing the second option means that you will have to work harder and suffer more than anyone else, but even so, success is not guaranteed at the end of the path... Have you considered this matter thoroughly?" Zhang Xuan warned grimly.

Zhang Xuan's students quickly replied.

"We have made up our minds!"

"Pain means nothing at all. As long as we can become stronger, we don't fear anything!"

Seeing his students choosing the second option without any hesitation, Zhang Xuan nodded in approval. "That's good."

From the very start, cultivation was a battle against the heavens, a tussle with fate. If they couldn't even find the courage for something like this, it was unlikely that they would be able to reach greater heights in the future even if they remained under his tutelage.

Zhang Xuan swiftly took out a few manuals of a simplified version of the Saint Ascension Decipher, which he had compiled and copied earlier, and passed it on to his students. After which, he gave them some time to read and memorize the content before beginning to explain it thoroughly.

The Saint Ascension Decipher was an extremely complicated cultivation technique, and even he had struggled slightly to comprehend it back then. If he didn't explain the content clearly and his students were to comprehend it incorrectly, there was a good chance that a major problem might occur with their cultivation.

Four hours later, after seeing that his students had a thorough understanding of the Saint Ascension Decipher, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

He instructed his students to cultivate diligently and dismissed them before turning his sight back to Sun Qiang.

"I believe you are well aware of the strength my teacher wields."

"Yes!" Sun Qiang hurriedly responded with a nod.

Even though he wasn't too sure how powerful the old master was, he was certain that the latter, at the very minimum, was an 8-star master teacher or even beyond, an existence that stood at the very top of the Master Teacher Continent.

"It's good that you know. So long as he wishes, he could easily find 7-star master teachers or even 8-star master teachers to serve as his butler. If this is the limit of your potential, I think that it won't be long before my teacher changes his butler," Zhang Xuan said nonchalantly.

Against Sun Qiang, he could only be vicious. Otherwise, the other party would slack at every single opportunity he found.

"Yes!"

Cold sweat began trickling down Sun Qiang's back.

In his period of time, the fawning of the Hongyuan Empire royal family and the gifts from the Shen Clan and the Liu Clan had all confused him, causing him to forget his priorities.

It was only after hearing those words that it dawned on him that if he wanted to follow the young master and the old master, he would need to become more powerful.

If he were to lag behind the others, it wouldn't be long before he became worthless to the old master and the young master. Neither of them would spare him an additional glance.

He clearly understood that without those two, he would be nothing more than an ordinary fatty. All of the prestige and wealth he enjoyed at the moment was just like the moon in a lake, dissipating with a single touch.

"You have been with me since Tianxuan Kingdom, and it is for your own good that I am saying these words. I hope that you know what is best for you. Alright, putting that aside for now, in the two months that I have been away, did anything happen?" After seeing that Sun Qiang understood his message, Zhang Xuan decided to stop there and asked about another matter instead.

"Un. The head of the Shen Clan visited a while ago, saying that it was best for the Cloudmist Flower to be sold in small batches over time so as to fully capitalize on its reputation as a rare commodity and maximize the profits from it. Thus, after some negotiation with them, we decided that we will release only ten jin of it every month in each empire..." Sun Qiang swiftly brought Zhang Xuan up to speed on the various business dealings.

"Un, I will leave all decisions for that to you." Zhang Xuan waved his hand.

He didn't possess the acute business sense that Sun Qiang and the Shen Clan had, so it was best for him to stay out of the matter and leave it to be professionals.

"Alright. This is the first sum of profit from the sale of the Cloudmist Flower!" Seeing that the young master was uninterested in the details of the business, Sun Qiang spoke no more of it. Instead, he presented a storage ring to him.

Taking it, Zhang Xuan took a look inside, and his eyes widened in shock. "So many?"

A warm radiance emanated from a humongous pile of several thousand high-tier spirit stones within the storage ring. The spiritual energy that shrouded them felt so concentrated that it took one's breath away.

"The profits we have earnt so far total to 3,327 high-tier spirit stones. The next sum should be coming in next month," Sun Qiang replied with a smile.

"More than three thousand high-tier spirit stones..." Zhang Xuan's lips twitched.

He had spent so much effort beguiling others and taming beasts, but he had only earned a few hundred high-tier spirit stones to date. Yet, just by selling a small portion of the Cloudmist Flower, he had easily earned a profit many times greater than that. Somehow, it felt like his efforts in the past had been in vain.

But nevertheless, he did need as many spirit stones as possible at the moment, so this was good news for him.

Three thousand high-tier spirit stone might seem like a huge fortune, but it might not necessarily last him till Saint realm 1-dan primary stage.

Not to mention, his students had also begun cultivating the Saint Ascension Decipher, and their consumption of spirit stones would surely rise exponentially. On top of that, there was also the Byzantium Helios Beast and the nine kings of the Cloudmist Ridge. It could be said that high-tier spirit stones were disappearing in his household at every moment.

Putting aside a few thousand, even several dozen thousand high-tier spirit stones wouldn't last long in his household!

In truth, while the Cloudmist Flower was valuable, it was still extremely difficult to sell it for such a price. Otherwise, the saint beasts of the Cloudmist Ridge would have long initiated such a business.

However, with the Earth Vein Spirit Essence being sapped dry and the mist shrouding the Cloudmist Ridge dissipating gradually, the conditions for producing Cloudmist Flowers were gradually deteriorating. As such, the Cloudmist Flower had become an exclusive and highly limited commodity.

On top of that, the Cloudmist Flowers on sale had a high maturity, and the Shen Clan had worked extremely hard on its marketing as well. Naturally, the price was driven up to an unbelievable extent.

Sun Qiang pondered for a moment before saying, "Also, School Head Mo came by yesterday. It appears that several guests have arrived at the Master Teacher Academy, and they are looking for you!"

"Looking for me? Who is it?"

"It is the principals of the other three Master Teacher Academies. They seem to have arrived at Hongyuan City recently. They wish to discuss the Combat Master Selection with you," Sun Qiang reported.

"They have arrived?" Zhang Xuan was stunned for a moment before recalling that the centennial Combat Master Selection was just around the corner.

"I will return to the Master Teacher Academy now!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

The Combat Master Selection was a huge event that occurred among the Four Great Master Teacher Academies every hundred years; the pride and dignity of each and every academy was at stake. As the principal, this was a responsibility he couldn't shirk from.

He swiftly left the residence and headed to the Elder Hall.

Shortly after he walked into the room, he saw Zhao Bingxu rushing up to him with an anxious look on his face.

"Principal Zhang, you are finally back. That is a huge relief..."

Noticing that something was wrong with Zhao Bingxu's state, Zhang Xuan asked with a frown, "Did something happen?"

"Reporting to Principal Zhang, Principal Wo Tianqiong from the Yunxu Master Teacher Academy, Principal Shen Pingchao from the Luoqing Master Teacher Academy, and Principal Wu Ran from the Qingzhu Master Teacher Academy have arrived at our academy. According to the news we have received, the representatives from the Combat Master Hall will be arriving shortly after as well. School Head Mo is currently keeping watch, waiting to welcome them in at any moment. I was also with him, but I

rushed over as soon as I heard that you have returned," Zhao Bingxu said anxiously.

"Isn't there some time before the commencement of the Master Teacher Selection?" Zhang Xuan was perplexed.

Back then, shortly after he returned from the Saint Ascension Platform, the Golden Origin Cauldron had said that there were still three months before the Combat Master Selection began. Judging from that, there should still have been several days for him to prepare. Why would everyone arrive so quickly?

"We just received news from the Combat Master Hall a moment ago that they received new orders from the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters; the Four Great Master Teacher Academies are to finish the selection exercise within three days," Zhao Bingxu explained.

"Such a rush?"

Zhang Xuan was still intending to conduct a lecture for his academy's candidates so as to raise their fighting prowess ahead of the selection, but who would have thought that the selection would begin shortly after his return? That was way too fast!

"I am not too sure about the details, but the Combat Master Selection will be commencing very soon, so I have to ask Principal Zhang to head over!" Zhao Bingxu said.

If Principal Zhang hadn't returned in time for the Combat Master Selection, they, as the Ten Great Master Teachers, would have had to overstep their authority to hold the fort in his absence. However, since Principal Zhang had returned just in time, it was only right for him to manage the situation personally.

They had managed to find quite a handful of outstanding youths in the internal selection within the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, but after seeing the candidates from the other three academies, they had no confidence whatsoever that their own candidates would be able to stand their ground against the others.

There was a clear difference between their candidates and the others, and if things went as they expected, they would only have one or two candidates clearing the selection.

"Let's head over to take a look."

Nodding, Zhang Xuan and Zhao Bingxu swiftly made their way to the training ground.

Chapter 927

I Will Give You Three Minutes

Even before arriving at the training ground, Zhang Xuan and Zhao Bingxu could already see the massive crowd that had gathered in the area. Nearly every student in the academy had congregated, curious to watch the event. The bustle was even comparable to that on the day of the inauguration ceremony.

The Combat Master Selection was a festive event that only happened once every hundred years. On this occasion, one would be able to witness the strongest fighting power of their power class, so there was no master teacher who would be willing to miss such an opportunity.

It wasn't just the students of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy who were present, the master teachers from the Hongyuan Empire Master Teacher Pavilion and even those from the surroundings empires were there, too, and each and every one of them had an excited expression that revealed their anticipation for the event that would occur very soon.

"Even though the Combat Master Hall is just a branch of the Master Teacher Pavilion, being a combat master grants one the opportunity to obtain even more resources, allowing one to cultivate faster than others. This is also the reason many hope to join their ranks," Zhao Bingxu said.

Typically speaking, combat masters commanded less prestige than master teachers. After all, as the military branch of the Master Teacher Pavilion, they specialized only in fighting, which meant that their capability in their supporting occupations and their ability to impart knowledge, the very factors that gave rise to the master teachers' prestigious standing in the world, fell beneath that of normal master teachers.

However, if one could join the Combat Master Hall, the Master Teacher Pavilion would devote resources to groom them, thus allowing them to grow easier and faster than an ordinary master teacher.

This was also the reason many master teachers desired to join their ranks.

However, it was a pity that the requirements to become a combat master were very demanding on one's combat talent. Out of ten thousand master teachers, there might not even be one who could meet the mark.

Halfway through his words, Zhao Bingxu suddenly recalled the astounding battle talent that their principal possessed too, and he couldn't help but ask, "Principal Zhang, have you ever thought of becoming a combat master?"

He might not have had much confidence in the students of their Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, but he had no doubt that their principal would qualify if he were to take the examination too.

"Me? I have no interest!" Zhang Xuan shook his head.

Like Kong shi, his plan was to study many occupations and become a true master teacher who would spread his teachings across the world.

Besides, if he were to become a combat master who knew nothing but battle, how was he going to resolve his Innate Fetal Poison?

As such, he didn't have much of an interest in becoming a combat master.

"That's a relief..." Zhao Bingxu heaved a sigh of relief.

If their principal were to join the Combat Master Hall, the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy would surely return back to the disunited and chaotic situation it had been in before.

There was no way they would be able to find another principal who could win the recognition of every single preceding principal and held the respect and admiration of every single student and teacher.

While they were speaking, they arrived at the training grounds, and the students who saw them hurriedly bowed respectfully.

"Paying respects to Principal Zhang, paying respects to School Head Zhao!"

"Principal Zhang has returned!"

"I heard that the reason for Principal Zhang's absence was because he was challenging

the Empire Building test of the 6-star master teacher examination. To have returned now, could it be that he has cleared the examination?"

"Do you even need to ask? Of course, he must have cleared the examination! Given the prowess of our principal, taking a 6-star master teacher examination is nothing at all!"

"Indeed! Putting aside the 6-star master teacher examination, even if he were to become a 7-star master teacher this very instant, I wouldn't be surprised at all..."

...

The news swiftly rippled across the crowd, and it didn't take long for everyone present to learn that Zhang Xuan was at the training grounds. Their eyes couldn't help but light up in excitement.

The emotion they harbored toward most elders was just deference for their power and authority, but toward the principal, who was younger than most of them, the emotions they felt were nothing but respect and admiration, and it was to the point where one could nearly call it blind faith.

After witnessing their principal produce miracle after miracle, at this point, they wouldn't be too surprised regardless of what the other party did. Instead, they would just think of it as what ought to be the case.

After gesturing with a nod at the hot-blooded students, Zhang Xuan turned his attention back to Zhao Bingxu and asked with a frown, "Where are other elders and the men from the other three Master Teacher Academies?"

The place was filled with students of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy and master teachers from the surrounding Master Teacher Pavilions, but not a single student or teacher of the other three Master Teacher Academies was anywhere to be seen.

"They are currently on the flying ship." Zhao Bingxu pointed with a bitter expression.

Tracing his finger, Zhang Xuan immediately saw a massive ship floating in the air, propped up by eight saint beasts both at the front and the back. Its sheer size was sufficient to block out most of the sky, and its very presence seemed to carry an indomitable air around it.

Too preoccupied with the students on the training ground, Zhang Xuan had failed to notice the massive ship flying high in the sky instantly.

Focusing his sight toward the ship, he soon noticed three old men standing on the deck with their hands behind their backs. They commanded a grand air around them, as if conquerors who could shake the world with a wave of their hands.

As for School Head Mo and the others, they were currently standing right in front of the three old men, seemingly negotiating with them.

"They aren't coming down?" Seeing this sight, Zhang Xuan frowned in displeasure.

To arrive at their Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy but refuse to alight from their flying ship, this could be said to be disregarding the honor and prestige of their Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy.

"School Head Mo is currently trying to invite them down, but considering how long it has been since then, it doesn't seem like it's working." Zhao Bingxu's complexion wasn't too good either.

Instead of walking in through the entrance with their students as it should be for a formal visit, they had chosen to fly their ship all the way in instead. That was no different from barging into one's living room on a mount, and it was considered extremely disrespectful behavior.

On top of that, the fact that School Head Mo and the others were speaking to them in front of the ship instead of on the ship showed that things weren't going well on their end.

"Tell them that I, the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, invite them to the audience stand to spectate the Combat Master Selection," said Zhang Xuan.

"Yes!" Zhao Bingxu nodded, but just as he was about to leave to relay their principal's words, he hesitated for a moment and asked, "But... what if they still refuse to come down?"

Considering that School Head Mo and the others had negotiated with the other party but to no avail, there was a good chance that the name of their principal might not work either.

With a displeased frown, Zhang Xuan raised his fingers and said, "I will give them three minutes."

"Three minutes?" Stunned, Zhao Bingxu's lips twitched.

Judging from their principal's tone... it seemed like he was prepared to wreak havoc if needed to!

But... of the Four Great Master Teacher Academies, Hongyuan was the weakest. If they were to start something, the ones to ultimately lose out would indubitably be them too.

Hesitating for a moment, Zhao Bingxu felt that he should advise their principal against that. "Principal Zhang, no matter what, they are still guests. If we make a move against them, others could easily find faults with us..."

If the other party were to be pummeled at their doorstep, wouldn't they suffer the same fate when they arrived at the other party's doorstep a hundred years later?

"Make a move against them? You are overthinking it."

Zhang Xuan shook his head and shot Zhao Bingxu a look of disdain. "We are master teachers, cultured individuals, so how can we resort to violence just because things don't go as we wish? Besides, the three principals are 7-star master teachers. Even if we wish to make a move against them, we have to be able to defeat them first!"

As 7-star master teachers, even with the most conservative of estimates, they had to be at Saint realm 2-dan. Unless Zhang Xuan were to have the Golden Origin Cauldron, the Byzantium Helios Beast, and the Myriad Anthive Queen attack them simultaneously, it would be difficult for him to achieve victory.

Besides, to resort to violence right from the start, how could the Master Teacher Academy lower itself to such brutish measures?

As master teachers, they were all dignified members of society. Naturally, they should be using civilized means befitting their standing to deal with conflict!

"Cough cough!" Feeling Zhang Xuan's disdainful gaze on him, Zhao Bingxu couldn't help but feel an extremely stifled sensation in his chest. "Then... the three minutes you spoke of..."

If it was another principal who had said that he was a cultured person, he would have believed it without any hesitation! But the man before him... he rummaged through everything in his brain but just couldn't find any reason to believe those words!

Would a cultured person challenge another to a Physician Life-and-Death Duel without any hesitation? Would a cultured person reduce a huge chunk of the entire Physician School to ruins on a whim?

Would a cultured person dismantle a puppet into its respective parts just because it wouldn't submit to him?

Could anyone be less cultured than him?

"Oh... What I mean is that if they are still up there by the end of three minutes, I will just have to use my own way to invite them down!" Zhang Xuan waved his hand leisurely. "Alright, just go ahead and do as I've told you to."

"Ahh... Alright then," Zhao Bingxu replied with an uneasy frown, apprehensive of what their principal would do.

However, since their principal had already issued such an order, he would just have to do as instructed. Thus, he leaped up and made his way toward the flying ship.

...

In the sky, School Head Mo and the others looked at the three old men and the many students behind them standing on the deck with looks of helplessness.

Just as Zhao Bingxu had said, they had been negotiating with the other party for a very long time, but the other party just wouldn't go down. On top of that, as fellow master teachers, they couldn't possibly do anything that could be considered a breach of etiquette, thus resulting in the awkward standstill they were in.

"Elders of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, you should return for the time being. We won't be sending you off," Wo Tianqiong said with a smile as he stroked his beard.

"This..." Seeing that he was unable to convince the other party to alight from the ship, School Head Mo and the others sighed deeply. Just as they were about to give up and head down, they suddenly saw Zhao Bingxu flying up.

"Principals, I am School Head Zhao Bingxu of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy. Our principal invites you and your students down for a gathering." Zhao Bingxu clasped his fist respectfully.

"Your principal has arrived?"

The three principals immediately turned their gazes downward to catch a glimpse the legendary new principal that they had heard so many rumors about, but there were simply far too many people below; it was hard for them to find the other party, especially considering they knew nothing about the other party's appearance.

"That is indeed the case." Zhao Bingxu nodded.

"Since he is here, I won't make things harder for you all anymore. Relay our message to him. We will send our men down to participate in the Combat Master Selection when it begins. We won't cause any unnecessary delays, so he doesn't have to worry about that," Wo Tianqiong said.

"This..." Seeing that the three principals had no intention of budging, Zhao Bingxu recalled their principal's words, and the feeling of uneasiness he felt suddenly intensified. Anxious, he urged, "Principals, I think that it will be best for you to head down now. Our principal... doesn't have the best of tempers, and he has the uncanny ability to realize the seemingly unexpected and impossible. It wouldn't be good if some unhappiness were to arise among our academies out of this matter."

Their principal hadn't said what he intended to do, but this only served to worsen Zhao Bingxu's apprehension.

His words were extremely earnest, but to the ears of those hearing them, it sounded as if he was threatening them instead.

"Doesn't have the best of tempers? Unhappiness? Hah, he just became the new principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, but his head is already in the moon?" Shen Pingchao was the first to flare up.

His face darkened as he said in displeasure, "A young man like him shouldn't get complacent and think that he is the entire world just because he has achieved some accomplishments of his own. Our Luoqing Master Teacher Academy does not belong to him, and there is no reason we should listen to his words! I will say this clearly, I won't be alighting from this ship today. What is your principal going to do about it, is

he going to force me down from this ship?"

"Principal Shen is right. If we refuse to alight from this ship, is your Hongyuan going to make a move on us? Tell your principal that youth is not a reason for recklessness. One must be absolutely careful with his words. I was still rather impressed with him after hearing about his feats, but to think that he would be such a complacent individual instead. You should start praying that his arrogance doesn't lead to Hongyuan's downfall instead!" Flinging his sleeves, Wu Ran harrumphed with a livid expression.

Bad temper? Unhappiness? Does that new principal really think that he can climb over our heads that easily?

Even if some unhappiness does arise, with the three of our academies on the same side, the one to suffer will be you!

"I... That isn't what I mean..." Not expecting his kind advice to be misunderstood in such a manner, Zhao Bingxu hurriedly tried to clarify his earlier statement, but he just couldn't find the words to do so properly. In an instant, he panicked even more.

Their principal had given him the time limit of only three minutes. Given the other party's personality, who knew what he would do?

If he were to have dispatch all of the spirit beasts and saint beasts of the Cloudmist Ridge to encircle the flying ship and attack it, there would be an intense battle even before the Combat Master Selection began!

If that was the case, the Four Great Master Teacher Academies would become a laughingstock of the entire Master Teacher Continent!

"That isn't what you mean? What else do you mean then? Why don't you tell us what your principal instructed you to tell us word for word then?" Gazing at Zhao Bingxu with eyes as sharp as an eagle, Wo Tianqiong could tell that the other party had words that he was hesitant to say.

"Our principal..."

Zhao Bingxu was conflicted, but he knew that it would only complicate matters if he were to continue hiding it at this point. Thus, gritting his teeth, he said, "He said that he hopes for you to come down within three minutes, or else... he will have to find

other ways to resolve this problem..."

"Three minutes?"

Hearing those words, School Head Mo and the others nearly keeled over.

Doomed... At this rate, a battle would really occur!

Chapter 928

Masochists

"Three minutes?"

"Find other ways to resolve the problem?"

"What an arrogant fellow! Fine, let's remain on this ship then. I sure would like to see how he intends to resolve this problem!"

The three principals were also visibly stunned for a brief moment before their complexions darkened even further.

They had been wondering what words the new principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy had instructed Zhao Bingxu to relay to them, but to think that this would be it!

A newly inaugurated principal actually showed dared to speak to them, 7-star master teachers, so arrogant, devoid of any respect... You are asking for it!

Since this is how arrogant you wish to play, fine! Four can play the game!

Let's see what you can do about us then!

"Principal Wo, Principal Shen, Principal Wu..." Seeing that the trio had already flown into a rage before he could finish his words, Zhao Bingxu felt extremely distressed.

By saying that their principal had a bad temper, he was only intending it as earnest advice to the three principals out of goodwill. He hadn't expected that those words would complicate matters further.

"Speak no more. Leave!" Wo Tianqiong waved his hands coldly.

"This..."

Seeing that their minds were made up, Zhao Bingxu could only shake his head.

Together with School Head Mo and the others, they headed back to the training ground.

Soon after the group from the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy left, the three principals traded gazes and shook their heads.

"That Principal Zhang of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy sure sounds like an interesting person." Shen Pingchao chuckled softly, the displeasure and anger on his face from before disappearing completely.

"Indeed. We intended to pose this flying ship as a test to see if he could resolve this problem perfectly, but from the looks of it... he sure is a hot-tempered person!" Wo Tianqiong sighed deeply.

As 7-star master teachers and the principals of their respective Master Teacher Academies, it was natural that they knew how disrespectful their behavior was. The reason they did so nevertheless was not because they looked down on Hongyuan and wanted to provoke it, but because they wished to assess the capability of the newly-appointed principal for themselves and see how he would deal with such a difficult situation.

In a sense, it could be seen as a test they were posing to the other party as veteran principals.

After all, the principals of the Four Great Master Teacher Academies were considered fellow peers, and they wanted to see if a twenty-year-old fellow was qualified to become one of their own.

In truth, this problem also wasn't a difficult one to resolve.

Going by normal conventions, as long as the other party had prepared a simple banquet for them and personally headed up to invite them down humbly, owing to the other party's sincere attitude, they would have had to drop their airs and comply.

Yet, that fellow had refused to lower his head, even threatening them with a time limit of three minutes, saying that he would take his own measures should they refuse to come down.

He sure was arrogant!

"It is not really a bad thing for a young person to be hot-blooded and arrogant, but too much of it will only impede his development!" Wu Ran shook his head. "In any case, this should do well to quell his arrogance. Hopefully, this will teach him that being talented shouldn't serve as a reason for him to behave haughtily!"

"That's right." Shen Pingchao nodded. "In truth, I am starting to feel a little curious as to the reason he dared utter such arrogant words. I wonder what his method of 'inviting us down' will be."

"Well, we will know soon enough."

The trio glanced at one another and chuckled softly.

Barely after they had started laughing, a voice reminiscent of the chiming of bells sounded deafeningly in the air.

"Moo!"

It sounded like the roaring of thunder and the stampede of thousands of beasts at the same time.

"What is that?"

Alarmed, the trio straightened their postures, prepared to make a move if necessary. However, before they could even react, they suddenly noticed that the bodies of the sixteen saint beasts propping up the flying ship were sinking.

Wheeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!

Before anyone could release a scream of agony, the ship abruptly descended with increasing momentum to the ground.

The Cloudcliff Flying Ship was several dozen meters long, and it was dependent on the sixteen saint beasts to remain afloat in the air. With all of the saint beasts being incapacitated all of a sudden, it lost all of its support simultaneously and began on an unstoppable free fall downwards.

"The Eight Notes of Heavenly Dragons! That fellow used the Eight Notes of Heavenly Dragons to suppress the saint beasts! This is disastrous..." Exerting his zhenqi, Wo Tianqiong stopped in midair, but watching the flying ship fall beneath him, his mouth

couldn't help but twitch uncontrollably.

The saint beasts supporting the Cloudcliff Flying Ship were all saint beasts who possessed the Dragon Bloodline. Such saint beasts possessed extraordinary physical prowess, making their flight speed and endurance far superior to their counterparts. As such, they were the ideal candidates to drive the flying ship.

If one had to pick a flaw regarding them, it would only be their natural deference toward those who possessed the Pureblooded Dragon Bloodline

But Pureblooded Dragons had already disappeared from the world many years ago. As such, there should have been no one who could exploit this flaw, and it should have been safe for them to use those Dragon Bloodline saint beasts.

Who could have known that the Eight Notes of Heavenly Dragons, something that everyone thought had gone missing many years ago along with the Pureblooded Dragons, would ring out all of a sudden!

Wasn't it said that these notes could only be voiced by those of the Dragon Tribe?

How could a human possibly voice it?

Not to mention, with such astounding prowess that even these Saint realm beasts would succumb to it at that!

But while he was in disbelief, he didn't just freeze on the spot. He swiftly gathered a compressed layer of air beneath the Cloudcliff Flying Ship in order to slow its descent to a gradual halt.

Shen Pingchao and Wu Ran also swiftly recovered from their shock and assisted him.

The Cloudcliff Flying Ship might have been massive, but the strength of three 7-star master teachers was tremendous, too. Under their combined efforts, they eventually managed to stop the descent of the flying ship safely in midair. However, barely after they had heaved a sigh of relief, yet another sound echoed from beneath.

"Mou!"

Hong long!

The sound wasn't loud, but it carried great penetrating power, reverberating in the ears of all clearly. In an instant, the sixteen saint beasts, whose bodies had been stiffened immobile and tongues were hanging from their mouths from the earlier sound, suddenly went into a rampage and charged downward, tugging the flying ship that was connected to them by a harness along with them.

Due to their furious charge, the massive ship, which had just come to a halt through the laborious effort of the three principals, was suddenly dragged down once more.

It was already sufficiently difficult to prop up that heavy flying ship, but with the incredible might of sixteen powerful saint beasts acting against them on top of that, there was no way the three principals could possibly hold on. Thus, the flying ship began falling once more.

Hong long long... Boom!

A huge cloud of dust rose up as the floating Cloudcliff Flying Ship crashed into the ground, creating a huge depression. The students, who had been standing on the deck, were forcefully thrown off the ship.

Due to the massive impact from the crash, some of the students who possessed lower cultivation sustained severe injuries even before participating in the Combat Master Selection.

Even those who had higher cultivation felt the zhenqi in their body going into disarray from the impact, and they couldn't help but be dumbfounded by the abrupt happenings.

Not only were those from the three Master Teacher Academies stunned by the turn of events, even School Head Mo and the others, who had just returned to the ground, found their mouths twitching uncontrollably upon seeing this sight.

They had thought that the time limit their principal had come up with was just for show, but who would have thought that he was really serious?

Didn't the heritage regarding the tongue of the Dragon Tribe disappear a long time ago? Furthermore, to speak it with apparent fluency, just how did their principal learn it?

At that moment, the three principals, who had been still standing grandly a moment

ago, suddenly plummeted down from the sky and landed onto the deck of the ship. Dust cloaked their faces, leaving them in an indescribably unkempt state.

School Head Mo and the others hurriedly asked, "Are you all fine?"

The three principals had shouldered the weight of the flying ship and the rampaging might of sixteen saint beasts simultaneously, and even with their Saint realm 2-dan and 3-dan cultivation, it was still beyond what they could withstand.

It was already fortunate that they weren't too severely injured from it.

Zhao Bingxu felt his head spinning furiously as he muttered beneath his breath, "Principal Zhang, is this what you mean by 'cultured'?"

The other party had just told him that he would resolve the matter in a mature manner befitting cultured individuals that master teachers should be... and barely a few moments later, such was the sight that had unfolded before him.

Is this what you mean by cultured?

Who in the world has ever seen a cultured man throwing his guests off from their flying ship, and on top of that... even crashing the other party's ship?

Zhao Bingxu swiftly searched through the crowd for their principal so as to reason with him, to have him know that such actions were uncondusive for the relations between the Four Great Master Teacher Academies. However, when he found the young man he was looking, Zhang Xuan was standing right in front of the saint beasts that had been propping up the flying ship.

Pilipala!

A series of punches and kicks, and in the next moment, the saint beasts released excited calls, and sixteen droplets of fresh blood flew out from their glabellae, headed toward the young man.

Sealing of contracts, the saint beasts had acknowledged their new master!

"The heck!"

"Not only did our principal crash their flying ship, he even tamed their saint beasts?"

The Ten Great Master Teachers were completely dumbstruck by the inconceivable sight before them.

"Alright!" Patting the dust from his hands, Zhang Xuan raised his hand, and the saint beasts swiftly undid the harnesses around their bodies and gathered in a neat line before him, as if soldiers forming up before their commander. Each of their heads were tilted upward proudly, as if delighted with the new master they had acknowledged.

Since they had refused to come down even after his invitation, he could only find another way to invite them down.

In truth, Zhang Xuan had already noticed that the sixteen saint beasts possessed the Dragon Bloodline at first sight. Since that was the case, the solution couldn't have been any simpler.

The Eight Notes of Heavenly Dragons and a bout of taming did the job.

Even though these sixteen were saint beasts, they only had the cultivation of Saint realm 1-dan primary stage. Given Zhang Xuan's current strength and the fact that those saint beasts were still affected by the Eight Notes of Heavenly Dragons, it didn't take him too much effort to tame them.

Since you were the ones who were being disrespectful first, there is no need for me to uphold etiquette with you.

We can talk about it slowly after I tame these saint beasts of yours!

"This..." Climbing up from the remains of the flying ship, Wo Tianqiong and Shen Pingchao nearly spurted a mouthful of blood.

We were only trying to assess you to see how well you can adapt to difficult situations... Surely you didn't need to go so far as to destroy such a precious flying ship and steal those sixteen saint beasts.

Not to mention, I had to serve those saint beasts the best food and drinks just to make them work for me. It is one thing for them to betray me, but what is with the proud look on their faces?

Do you need to be so smug about taking that fellow as your master?

They had heard that the other party often did things beyond one's expectations, but this... it was not just beyond expectations, it was beyond common decency!

"He is Principal Zhang? I see... I should have guessed it!"

Contrary to the stifled looks on the faces of the other two principals, as soon as Wu Ran saw Zhang Xuan's appearance, his body immediately began trembling in agitation.

He had heard about the many incredible deeds of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy's new principal, but he had never seen the other party in person. Never would he have thought that it would be the young man who had pointed out the flaws in Kong shi's insight on the Saint Ascension Platform and received Kong shi's acknowledgement!

Back then, when the young man abruptly disappeared, he had spent several days searching for him around the Saint Ascension Platform but to no avail. Just when he thought that he had lost the opportunity to converse with that outstanding young man and learn from him... it turned out that the other party was the legendary principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy!

If he had known earlier, he would have definitely paid the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy a visit long ago. There were many lingering questions and doubts in his mind, which he wanted to consult the other party about!

Back then, he had been thinking that it was impossible for such an outstanding young man to be buried amid the dust—a true star would eventually outshine those around him—and it seemed like that was indeed the case!

As a person who had been acknowledged by Kong shi himself, earning the recognition of the many preceding principals was a piece of cake!

The more he thought about it, the more excited he became. Eventually, unable to hold himself back any longer, he rushed forward to the young man and greeted him. "Wu Ran of the Qingzhu Master Teacher Academy pays respect to Zhang shi!"

"It seems like we meet once again," Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

"Yes!" Wu Ran clasped his fist and nodded excitedly.

"This..."

The Ten Great Master Teachers and innumerable students glanced at one another, overwhelmed with frenzy by the sight before them.

Those principals, who had been standing haughtily on their flying ship a moment ago, refusing to comply with School Head Mo and the others, had suddenly had such a huge change in attitude after crashing down, greeting their principal like a humble student...

Could it be that these principals also suffered from the same affliction that plagued the preceding principals, willing to comply only after undergoing a round of pummeling?

In other words... masochists?

Chapter 929

Compensation

"Cough cough! So, you are Principal Zhang! I have heard much about you, and you are indeed an outstanding individual!"

It took a long while before Wo Tianqiong and Shen Pingchao flew over awkwardly from the rubble to meet Zhang Xuan.

Had they known that it would end with such embarrassment, they would have just alighted from the ship immediately.

After suffering such a heavy and embarrassing fall, the towering and otherworldly image they had built with great difficulty had shattered into bits too.

"Junior Zhang Xuan pays respect to Principal Wo and Principal Shen!" Zhang Xuan bowed deeply.

As a 6-star master teacher, he couldn't show any breach in etiquette toward a 7-star master teacher, or else the other party would be able to easily criticize his behavior.

"As fellow principals, we can be considered peers, so there is no need to uphold such formalities with us. Principal Zhang, it was indeed impolite of me to drive my flying ship into your Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, but... may I ask of you to return my saint beasts to me?" Wo Tianqiong asked with a livid face as he clasped his fist.

As an artifact, the Cloudcliff Flying Ship wasn't so fragile as to be destroyed with a single crash. While it did suffer a certain degree of damage, it was still within an acceptable range and could be repaired. However, those saint beasts were valuable assets of their Yunxu Master Teacher Academy, and even with the great wealth they possessed, it would be a huge blow to lose them!

Furthermore, without those saint beasts, how were their students and teachers supposed to return to the academy after the Combat Master Selection came to an end?

Qingyuan Conferred Empire had vast territories, and the Four Great Master Teacher

Academies were located very far from one another. Even on the Cloudcliff Flying Ship, it still took them more than a month to get there. If they were to travel on foot, those who hadn't reached Saint realm would probably first die of old age before returning back!

With a conflicted expression, Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before saying, "It is not really a problem for me to return them to you, but..."

"But what?" Wo Tianqiong asked.

Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan replied, "To be honest, for this Combat Master Selection, our Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy invited top-notch gardeners to put up exquisite sights for those present to enjoy. For that, we purchased many valuable artifacts in order to bring out magnificent aesthetics worthy of the occasion, and as a result, we are still knee-deep in debt at the moment. Yet, your flying ship has destroyed everything with its crash. Considering the wealth that your Yunxu Master Teacher Academy has, is it possible... for you to compensate us for that? If you are willing to do so, I will surely return your saint beasts immediately!"

The fall of the Cloudcliff Flying Ship had caused a huge depression in the ground, and many of the academy's buildings had been reduced to rubble.

"Top-notch gardeners? Exquisite sights? Valuable artifacts?" Wo Tianqiong's mouth twitched.

It was not like he couldn't see the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy from his flying ship, and he knew that those were ordinary buildings. Furthermore, exquisite sights? Valuable artifacts? He had taken a look when the ship crashed to the ground, and the wreckage only covered an ordinary square and several streets.

Despite knowing this, he had no choice but to go along with whatever the other party was saying since his saint beasts were being held captive by the other party. Thus, clasp his fist, Wo Tianqiong asked, "May I know how much it will cost?"

"I am not too sure about it either. As you all know, it hasn't been long since I became the principal, so I am not too sure about such matters either. Why don't I help you ask around?"

Waving his hand, Zhang Xuan beckoned School Head Mo over and asked, "School Head Mo, I need you to come up with an estimate for the cost of repairing the buildings and

artifacts that Principal Wo's flying ship has destroyed."

"Yes!" School Head Mo nodded before flying into the air to assess the damage.

A moment later, he returned and informed Zhang Xuan through zhenqi telepathy, "Principal Zhang, the flying ship has destroyed a total of eight buildings and three lakes. All in all, the reparation cost should add up to around... two high-tier spirit stones!"

Even though it might seem as if high-tier spirit stones were not worth much, given the astounding pace at which Zhang Xuan was consuming them, their purchasing power was not to be scoffed at.

The area that the flying ship had crashed into didn't have any important amenities, so two high-tier spirit stones was more than sufficient to repair them perfectly.

"What did you say?" As if he couldn't believe what he had heard, Zhang Xuan exclaimed in shock as a frown surfaced on his forehead. "20,000 high-tier spirit stones? Are you sure that is sufficient to fix the amenities perfectly?"

"20,000..." School Head Mo was dumbstruck by Zhang Xuan's response.

When did I say twenty thousand? I clearly said two high-tier spirit stones...

"Those exquisite buildings were not only carefully built by the hands of top-notch masters, they are also symbolic of the sweat and tears of our predecessors, an important heritage of our Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy! Its value is not something that can be measured with just money! Take a closer look before coming up with another estimate. Don't worry, the Yunxu Master Teacher Academy is the leading academy of the Four Great Master Teacher Academies. Given their prestige and wealth, they won't stoop so low as to avoiding payment!" Zhang Xuan said.

"Keng..." School Head Mo's lips twitched. With a questioning tone, he asked, "Then... about 25,000? Or perhaps 30,000?"

"Are you certain 30,000 is enough?" Zhang Xuan asked sternly.

"30,000... does seem to be insufficient now that you mention it. How about 50,000?" School Head Mo's eyelids were twitching uncontrollably as he spoke.

"50,000? We need that many high-tier spirit stones to repair the amenities? Well, I guess that is to be expected. Those are the legacies that our predecessors have left in our hands, and we can't measure them with just mere money."

Zhang Xuan sighed deeply before turning an apologetic gaze to Wo Tianqiong. "Principal Wo, just as you have heard, the destruction the flying ship has caused to our academy is simply too great. We will require roughly 50,000 high-tier spirit stones in order to restore it to its original state."

Hearing those words, Wo Tianqiong's eyelids twitched uncontrollably.

Can you be any faker than that?

Those lousy amenities of yours won't even cost five high-tier spirit stones to repair... but the price you are telling me is 50,000?

Do you take me for a fool?

However, he knew that the other party was intentionally hiking up the price in order to repay the favor. Well, he was indeed the one who had been disrespectful first.

Sighing helplessly, Wo Tianqiong shook his head and offered a compromise, "Cough cough. Principal Zhang, it was indeed discourteous of me to have my flying ship barge into the grounds of your academy. For this, allow me to earnestly apologize to you for my breach of etiquette. How about this, why don't you allow my Yunxu to repair your amenities for you? I guarantee that they will be exactly the same as before."

Noting the other party's courteous attitude, Zhang Xuan replied with a smile, "You are offering to repair our amenities for us? I can't expect Principal Wo to do that for us! However, it happens that our academy is still lacking a grade-7 Spirit Gathering Formation, so if Principal Wo is willing to have one set up for us, we will take care of the reparations ourselves."

Bringing a massive ship to my academy, are you trying to put on airs before me? You should be glad that I am willing to back down with just this. Otherwise, my airs would be able to easily crush you into the ground!

"A grade-7 Spirit Gathering Formation?" Hearing those words, Wo Tianqiong's cheeks began to twitch.

To set up a grade-7 formation, not only would one have to invite 7-star formation masters over, one would have to purchase grade-7 formation flags as well. Each one of those grade-7 formation flags cost a huge fortune, and to buy enough of them to construct a formation covering an entire academy and capable of operating for many years... The cost was nothing short of terrifying!

But judging from the other party's expression, this seemed to be the other party's bottom line. If he were to turn this down as well, it was likely that he wouldn't be getting back his saint beasts.

Sixteen saint beasts that possessed the Dragon Bloodline, that was a huge fortune to their academy! Furthermore, for them to be kidnapped before their eyes, that was a huge disgrace to the Yunxu Master Teacher Academy. He had to get them back no matter the cost!

Thus, after a moment of hesitation, Wo Tianqiong finally clenched his jaw and replied, "Alright, I will agree to your request!"

"Principal Wo sure is generous; you have my respect!" Zhang Xuan clasped his fist politely before turning to the saint beasts behind him and flicking his wrists consecutively to return their droplets of blood, thus releasing their master-servant contract. "Alright, you are free now. You should return to Yunxu."

Roar roar roar!

Hearing Zhang Xuan's words, the saint beasts howled indignantly, unwilling to part from him.

As ones who possessed the Dragon Bloodline, they understood the significance behind the Eight Notes of the Heavenly Dragons. The person before them was very likely a transformation of a Pureblooded Dragon. It wasn't easy for them to take him as their master, and they took pride in the very fact. Yet, in the next moment, their contracts were dispelled, so it was natural that they would feel indignant.

Seeing the reactions of those saint beasts, Wo Tianqiong gritted his teeth and promised, "If you return to Yunxu, I will double your provisions!"

Roar!

Hearing his promise, the sixteen saint beasts hesitated for a long moment before

reluctantly returning back to the Cloudcliff Flying Ship, unhappy and disappointed.

Watching this sight, Wo Tianqiong felt incredibly stifled within, and he had to calm himself for a long while before he could catch his breath.

He had heard that Principal Zhang was a person who had the uncanny ability to realize the seemingly unexpected and impossible, and after seeing it in person, he couldn't help but fervently agree with it.

Indeed, the other party was indeed so skilled at realizing the unexpected that he felt that he might die from stress if it were to happen a few more times.

Just after he eased the pain in his chest, the young man opposite to him suddenly sighed deeply and said, "If you really wish to follow me, you can always secretly return after sending them back to Yunxu."

Roar roar roar!

The sixteen saint beasts immediately howled in frenzied delight.

Wo Tianqiong suddenly felt the intense ache in his chest return, threatening to take his life away.

What the heck is this? You can't do that!

At this rate, I fear that I will die of rage even before the Combat Master Selection begins.

He had been pumped up when he first arrived, thinking that with the experts Yunxu had, they would surely achieve unprecedentedly good results this time around. Who could have known that even before the Combat Master Selection had begun, he would already be done in badly by the new principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy?

Just thinking about the matter left him incredibly frustrated inside.

Driving his zhenqi to suppress the pain in his chest, Wo Tianqiong said, "Alright. Now that we have resolved this problem, let's talk about how we should proceed for the Combat Master Selection."

"Indeed. The reason we are gathered here today is for the centennial Combat Master Selection, so we should get to the main topic at hand!" Shen Pingchao said. "Combat masters represent the top fighting power within the Master Teacher Pavilion, and they are the sharpest blades that mankind has to fend off the threat of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. As such, we have to deal with this matter carefully."

"That is a given." Zhang Xuan nodded.

He had only given them a small punishment for their disrespect toward the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy previously. After that was settled, he would still have to collaborate with them closely on the Combat Master Selection so as to not impede such an important matter.

Putting aside the matter from before, Wo Tianqiong said grimly, "The slots for the Combat Master Selection this round have been doubled. On previous occasions, only fifty students were accepted over the five grades for the Four Great Master Teacher Academies, but this time around, they are accepting a hundred!"

"Accepting a hundred?" This was the first time Zhang Xuan was hearing about the slots for the Combat Master Selection, and he couldn't help but be astonished.

Over the five grades, Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy had more than a hundred thousand students. Even though he wasn't too sure about the numbers for the other three Master Teacher Academies, considering their superior standing to Hongyuan, their numbers likely exceeded Hongyuan's.

In other words, using even the most conservative of estimates, out of a total of 400,000 students across the Four Great Master Teacher Academies, only a hundred people were accepted into the Combat Master Hall once every century!

In other words, the ratio was 1 in 4000!

Furthermore, if they were to consider the norm of fifty slots, the ratio would rise to 1 in 8000. It was no wonder others viewed entering the Combat Master Hall as a great prestige, it was extremely difficult to join!

"While the number of slots did increase, the selection has become stricter as well. I heard that there might even be life-and-death duels!" Shen Pingchao continued.

"Life-and-death duels?" Zhang Xuan frowned upon hearing those words.

"Indeed. Unlike normal master teachers, the sole responsibility for combat masters is to fight and fend off the dangers threatening humanity. Without undergoing a life-and-death situation, how can they display fighting prowess surpassing the ordinary?" Wu Ran said.

Chapter 930

Impartation Ahead of the Battle

"That's true." Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

Without undergoing the experience and fear from a life-and-death situation, it was difficult for one to sharpen their state of mind and maximize their fighting potential.

Zhang Xuan might not have cultivated for long, but a crucial reason why he was able to attain the fighting prowess he currently possessed was due to the numerous life-and-death situations he had been in. There was no expert who had become strong without paying the corresponding price for it.

Most master teachers were already skilled fighters themselves, and becoming a combat master meant being the cream of the crop among the master teachers. To be able to surpass the already powerful master teachers, it went without saying that one would have to put in much more effort than the others.

Just taking Zhang Xuan for example, in order to attempt to cultivate a higher-grade Origin Core, he had spent two whole months only to cultivate from Half-Saint primary stage to Half-Saint pinnacle. If it had been an ordinary Heaven's Path Divine Art, he would have already been a Saint realm expert by now.

This was the amount of effort and hard work that one would have to put in!

"May I know what form the Combat Master Selection will take? Have you heard any news about it?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"I am not too sure about the details, but the norm is to conduct an elimination tournament among the candidates; the top fifty will be selected to join the Combat Master Hall."

The rules of the selection might change each and every time, but the fundamental prerequisite to becoming a combat master would never change, and that was to possess fighting prowess superior to the other competitors!

Regardless of how, under the circumstances that one didn't utilize any special artifact or tamed beast, as long as one was able to defeat the other competitors of the same grade, one would be the ultimate victor.

"An elimination tournament..." Zhang Xuan nodded.

That was indeed the most straightforward and fairest way to sieve out the strongest ones among the candidates, but its flaw was also apparent as well—the lives of the candidates could potentially be put at risk.

In an important selection like this, there was no room for holding back. Candidates would be forced to use their full strength, and casualties were inevitable under such circumstances.

At this moment, Wo Tianqiong suddenly proposed with a smile, "Right, since the representatives from the Combat Master Hall have not arrived yet, why don't we have our candidates display their prowess so that they can prepare themselves for what is to come? This way, they should be able to keep their nerve in the selection later on and exert their greatest fighting prowess!"

"Indeed. This will also give them a glimpse into the strength of their competitors as well."

"It is important for master teachers to interact more with one another so that they can improve. If a person just keeps to themselves, their worldly view will only be narrowed, thus limiting their growth!"

Shen Pingchao and Wu Ran nodded in agreement.

"That sounds good." With three of the principals expressing their approval for the matter, it wouldn't be good for Zhang Xuan to disagree.

Besides, this would be good for Hongyuan's candidates as well. They would be able to prepare themselves mentally for what was to come.

Having received unanimous approval regarding the display of power, the principals swiftly issued several instructions to their teachers, and before long, hundreds of students with cultivation ranging from Consonant Spirit realm to Chrysalis realm emerged from the flying ship.

Just like the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, the other Master Teacher Academies had also selected twenty men for each of the five grades, meaning that there were a hundred candidates from each academy.

The emergence of the three hundred geniuses from the three other Master Teacher Academies put a huge amount of pressure on the students of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy.

Activating his Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan began assessing them carefully.

Each of them had compact muscles, and their zhenqi was rich and condensed. They were definitely qualified to be considered experts among those of their cultivation realm.

"School Head Mo, bring our candidates over," Zhang Xuan instructed.

School Head Mo nodded, and not too long later, the hundred candidates the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy had chosen appeared in the training grounds.

This was the first time Zhang Xuan had seen the candidates of his academy, and comparing them to the candidates from the other academies, he couldn't help but shake his head.

The candidates from Hongyuan were of the same age range and cultivation realms as the other candidates, but in terms of disposition and richness of zhenqi, it was clear that they were lacking.

If they were to really fight in an elimination tournament, it was highly likely that only a pitifully small number of them would be able to clear the selection.

It was no wonder even the Ten Great Master Teachers themselves had forgotten about a matter as major as the Combat Master Selection before, needing the reminder of the Golden Origin Cauldron. It seemed like the Combat Master Selection was indeed nothing much to the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, and on the contrary, it could even be considered a source of shame that no one was willing to speak about.

As time passed, everyone had eventually forgotten about the matter.

"I am a Grade-1 student from the Yunxu Master Teacher Academy, Wei Chang!"

As the four hundred students participating in the Combat Master Selection settled down before a dueling platform, a student from the Yunxu Master Teacher Academy leaped onto the stage, and with a jerk of his arm, a powerful aura burst into the air. Perhaps due to the immense amount of zhenqi gushing through his acupoints, a whistling sound could be heard from his body.

Despite only possessing the cultivation of Consonant Spirit realm, he commanded an aura that felt as though he could pierce through the heaven.

"Powerful!"

"Indeed! With such strength, there are probably very few Grade-2 students who can rival him..."

"I definitely wouldn't be a match for him at all..."

"Formidable! As expected of Yunxu, which is ranked first among the Four Great Master Teacher Academies, their students are indeed extraordinary!"

...

Seeing Wei Chang's display of power, the Grade-1 students beneath the dueling platform couldn't help but show grim expressions.

Despite being at Consonant Spirit realm too, the other party's strength was clearly far beyond theirs. Putting aside Grade-1 students like them, even Grade-2 students, Cosmos Bridge realm cultivators, would struggle to be a match for him.

Just that single move had managed to strike fear in their hearts.

Seeing this sight, Zhang Xuan frowned.

There seemed to be nothing wrong with the display of power, but this could easily create undue mental pressure on the relatively weaker Hongyuan candidates.

It seemed like the other principals were trying to vie back some dignity after the fall.

"I am a Grade-1 student from the Luoqing Master Teacher Academy, Zhang Lin..."

"I am a Grade-1 student from the Qingzhu Master Teacher Academy..."

...

Soon, all of the Grade-1 students of the other three Master Teacher Academies had made their round on the dueling platform. Even though their cultivation was only at Consonant Spirit realm, the aura and disposition they exuded revealed a hint of the immense fighting prowess they could potentially display.

There were a couple who possessed unique constitutions, which easily granted them a might far greater than their peers when activated. They weren't lacking even when compared to Wang Ying and the others when they had still been at Consonant Spirit realm.

On the other hand, the candidates from Hongyuan were truly unimpressive in comparison. Not only were their physical conditions beneath that of their opponents, even their comprehension of battle techniques was vastly inferior as well. If they were to fight the other candidates in a duel, it wouldn't matter much if they lost, but if things went wrong, they could stand to be severely injured.

Of the twenty Grade-1 students selected, there were only one or two who could still stand their ground against the others. The rest stood no chance at all.

But that was to be expected. It must have been at least three months since the other academies selected their candidates, and on the long journey to Hongyuan, they would have received the personal guidance from a 7-star master teacher as well. It would have been difficult for them to not have raised their fighting prowess in such a situation.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan had only returned from Xuanyuan Kingdom not too long ago, and this was his first time meeting Hongyuan's candidates, leaving him no chance to offer them his guidance. Given so, how could Hongyuan's candidates possibly match up to the others?

Even if School Head Zhao, School Head Mo, and the others had guided them personally, limited by their eye of discernment and knowledge, their impartation would still be unable to match up to a 7-star master teacher.

This... How can we win this? Zhang Xuan rubbed his temples in distress.

Even before the selection had begun, the confidence of Hongyuan's candidates had already been shattered to bits. Given their current state, they probably wouldn't last

several blows from their opponents in the duel later on.

After which, the Grade-2, Grade-3, Grade-4, and Grade-5 candidates headed up to display their strength, and the fighting prowess that Hongyuan's candidates displayed was truly unsatisfactory.

Of the Four Great Master Teacher Academies, the candidates from Yunxu were the strongest. Each and every one of them was capable of challenging opponents beyond their cultivation, making them difficult adversaries to face.

If only Xue Zhenyang, Long Cangyue, and the others hadn't achieved a breakthrough.

He had offered his personal guidance to them, and after the duel they had with Wu Xu, their fighting prowess had soared significantly. If they were to be participate in the Combat Master Selection as well, there was a very good chance that they would have been able to win some slots for the Grade-5 class. However, it was a pity that they had already achieved a breakthrough to Half-Saint, thus losing the qualification to do so.

Zhang Xuan did conduct lectures for the Xuanxuan Faction from time to time, but as freshmen, their starting point was too low. Compared to the other seniors who had been in the academy for some time, their fighting prowess was still lacking.

This was also the reason none of them had cleared the internal selections.

After watching the power display, Wu Ran remarked with a frown, "Principal Zhang, it doesn't look too good for your candidates."

As a 7-star master teacher, it was apparent to him that the candidates from Hongyuan were considerably weaker than those from the other three academies.

Under such circumstances, it would be difficult for Hongyuan to obtain a decent number of slots.

"Un." Zhang Xuan shook his head. Turning to Wo Tianqiong and the others, he asked, "Since the representatives from the Combat Master Hall have yet to arrive, may I make use of this time to impart some combats insights to my candidates first?"

"You wish to conduct a lecture for your candidates now?" Hearing his words, Wo Tianqiong and the others were taken aback.

It was not to say that a last-minute impartation would be completely useless, but considering that the representatives of the Combat Master Hall were going to arrive in two hours' time, according to the news they had received, its effectiveness would be minimal at most!

"That's right." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Considering the current condition of Hongyuan's candidates, if he didn't do anything, even if the number of candidates that the Combat Master Hall accepted was increased to two hundred or three hundred, most of their candidates would still be unable to clear the selection.

Thus, the only thing he could do was impart some combat insights to them and hope that it would aid them in the duels to come.

After a moment of hesitation, Wu Ran couldn't help but offer some advice. "Principal Zhang, there is no rule forbidding you from offering pointers to your candidates at this point, but if you lecture them now, I fear that it might confuse them and lower their fighting prowess instead!"

The fact that these students had cleared the internal selection to become candidates for the Combat Master Selection meant that they possessed extraordinary aptitude for battle, and they had already forged their own fighting style.

If Zhang Xuan were to attempt to correct their faults, it could mess up their fighting style, resulting in their moves becoming chaotic, thus lowering their fighting prowess instead.

Knowing that Wu Ran was advising him out of goodwill, Zhang Xuan replied with a smile, "I understand, but I still need to give it a try."

After which, he gathered the hundred candidates from Hongyuan and set up a barrier to isolate the area, preventing anyone from peering in or hearing what was happening inside, before turning to face them.

Gazing intently at the candidates, Zhang Xuan asked, "Are there any of you who are reluctant to become a combat master?"

Being a combat master had its pluses, but there were still quite a number of master teachers whose interests lay not in that direction.

"No!"

The crowd shook their heads.

Since they had participated in the internal selection and cleared it, they would have already long made up their minds.

"Good. Since all of you intend to become combat masters, you are going to have to raise your fighting prowess to greater heights."

Seeing that there was no one who was reluctant to become a combat master, Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes and said, "I will teach you a few insights and tricks that can raise your fighting prowess and grasp of battle swiftly. I hope that you can work hard and try to comprehend them."

At this point, it was already too late to reinforce their cultivation further. Since it was impossible to work on their cultivation, the only viable option was to raise their comprehension of battle techniques and grasp of battle.

"Yes!" Upon learning that their principal was going to guide them personally, the eyes of the students couldn't help but light up.

The confidence that had extinguished after witnessing the might of the candidates of the other academies had also reignited.

They could still recall the huge commotion that had arisen from the public lecture their principal had made during his inauguration ceremony. Back then, his lecture had extremely been general so that it was applicable to teachers and students alike in the academy, but even so, it had still had such tremendous effects.

Now that they were receiving the other party's guidance directly, what kind of effects would there be?

Just the thought of it left them trembling in anticipation.

Seeing the passionate eyes on him, Zhang Xuan knew that they were ready to learn. Without any hesitation, he began his lecture.

"The crux of battle techniques lie in refining one's exertion of zhenqi, maximizing the strength one is able to display. As such, if one wishes to further the prowess of their

battle technique, they must possess a pure state of mind that will drive them forward courageously...”

Chapter 931

The Representatives from the Combat Master Hall Arrive!

Zhu Jian was one of the Grade-1 students chosen by School Head Xu Changqing to participate in the Combat Master Selection. Two years ago, Hongchi Empire had sent him to the academy to study.

After the guidance of his teacher and the hard work he had put in for two years, he had finally reached Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle, a step away from reaching Cosmos Bridge realm.

In truth, he had already accumulated sufficient zhenqi to achieve a breakthrough three months ago. However, in order to participate in the Combat Master Selection, he had decided against it, choosing to further refine his Consonant Spirit realm cultivation instead. Through his hard work, he was able to almost reach the limits of what could be achieved in his realm.

This was also the reason he had able been to emerge victorious in the internal selection with an outstanding result of being in the fifth place.

He had originally been an unfavored prince of Hongchi Empire, but if he could become a combat master, he would surely stand out among the other princes. Even if he couldn't inherit the throne in the end, at the very least, he would be able to free himself from the scorn of others and become a respected figure in the royal family.

He had thought that with his outstanding achievement of finishing fifth place in the internal selections, he would be able to emerge victorious in the Combat Master Selection as long as he were to work hard.

However, when he saw the power display from the other three Master Teacher Academies, his heart had turned cold. Even though the candidates from the other academies were in Grade-1 as well, their strength was at a totally different level.

Even without exchanging blows, he could clearly feel from the might the others

emanated that he wouldn't even make it into the top forty with his current strength.

Given that there were only twenty slots for each grade, it could be said that... it was hopeless for him.

While the principal had said that he would conduct a lecture just to impart his combat insights to them, he still didn't think a short two hours could cause any significant change in his strength.

After all, cultivation was a process of accumulation. It was infeasible to raise one's fighting prowess abruptly just by some last-minute training.

Even if the knowledge that the principal was going to impart to them was profound and exquisite, allowing him to raise his fighting prowess up a notch, he had no doubt that he would still be utterly defeated at the hands of the experts from the other three Master Teacher Academies.

The display of power from the other candidates had utterly shattered his confidence.

Sighing deeply, he turned his gaze back to the front.

The principal was looking over with a kind gaze, and his warm voice echoed in his ear like heavenly music. He was explaining the utilization of certain tricks and battle techniques in combat. Just by hearing a few words from him, the students could feel their zhenqi pulsating excitedly, wanting to practice as he had taught.

Listening to the lecture, Zhu Jian was awed as well.

It had to be said that the principal's comprehension of battle techniques and combat had reached a masterful level, far more formidable than any master teacher he knew of.

However, it was a pity that time was too short. Two hours was just insufficient to change anything.

If only Principal Zhang had returned half a month earlier, there might still be hope of victory. Zhu Jian sighed deeply.

If they had half a month's time to ruminate over the principal's combat insights and incorporate them into their fighting style through practice battles, they might just

have been able to make a massive improvement that could allow them to potentially achieve victory in the Combat Master Selection.

However, now that they were only two hours away from the selection, what was the point?

Shaking his head, Zhu Jian was thinking that he should just give up and listen no more when the eyes of a junior seated not too far from him suddenly lit up, seemingly having comprehended something. That junior raised his finger and tapped forward, and the glint of a sword materialized on the tip of his fingernail before falling straight to the ground, creating a huge depression.

This is... Sword-Man Union? Zhu Jian narrowed his eyes in astonishment.

He had sparred with this junior before, and the other party did possess quite a bit of talent in swordsmanship. Nevertheless, the other party had still been a huge distance off from matching up to him. Why would the other party... suddenly reach Sword-Man Union when he wasn't even close to it yet?

Sword-Man Union, that was an extremely important demarcation line in swordsmanship. One who had achieved that realm would have their fighting prowess increased immensely! Even though the junior had only ranked tenth back in the internal selection, with the newfound prowess he had just obtained through comprehending Sword-Man Union, the other party would definitely be able to get into at least the top three should the internal selection be conducted once more!

Frightening!

Geji! Geji!

While he was still trying to digest the shock from his junior's abrupt breakthrough, he suddenly heard another sound not too far away. It came from the creaking of bones and muscles, but the deafening loudness of the noise made it sound like the rumbling of thunder instead, and even the ground seemed to tremble under its sheer volume.

This is... the sound of the Tigerhowl Adamantium Fist being cultivated to Major Accomplishment! But when I crossed blows with that fellow just yesterday, wasn't his mastery of the technique... only at Novice level? Zhu Jian's lips twitched as he felt his head spin in confusion, unable to make sense of what was happening around him.

The person who had produced that loud creaking sound was a familiar face too. In the Grade-1 internal selection, the other party had ranked seventeenth. Just the day before, he had sparred with the other party, and the other party's mastery in his Tigerhowl Adamantium Fist had clearly been at Novice level, still a certain distance away from reaching Initiate.

One's mastery of battle techniques could be classified into several tiers: Novice, Initiate, Minor Accomplishment, Major Accomplishment, and Consummation.

How could that fellow, in the blink of an eye, make a breakthrough of three whole tiers and reach Major Accomplishment in his mastery of the Tigerhowl Adamantium Fist?

Wasn't that a little too exaggerated?

Hu hu hu!

However, that wasn't the end of Zhu Jian's shock. Not too far away, zhenqi suddenly started gushing out of a young man's Taiyang acupoint, gathering atop his head in the form of a bizarre bird that seemed like it could soar into the sky at any moment.

(The Taiyang acupoint refers to one's temples, which are located between the top of the ear and the eye.)

With just a glance, Zhu Jian could immediately tell that this was another symbol of one achieving Major Accomplishment in the mastery of a certain battle technique.

Peng peng peng! Pah pah pah!

Be it his front, back, left, or right, innumerable surges of zhenqi spurted chaotically within the area of the barrier. Almost every single student, after listening to the principal's lecture, had comprehended something and achieved a breakthrough.

The principal's lecture... is that formidable?

It was only at this moment that Zhu Jian realized that he was about to let the opportunity of a lifetime slip through his fingers. He swiftly suppressed the shock and incomprehension in his mind to listen to the lecture carefully.

It had to be said that the principal's lecture was first-rate. The content gradually delved from the basics to the complex, and the essence regarding combat skills and

battle techniques was carefully sieved out and laid bare before everyone to see.

Profound concepts that they struggled to understand normally were deciphered into simple language that they could easily comprehend and grasp.

Just by listening to it for a short moment, Zhu Jian found himself falling into a deep trance, his attention completely absorbed by the words spoken before him.

It was at this moment that he realized that, despite his many years of cultivation and studying of battle techniques, his understanding of combat was laughably shallow. As compared to what the principal was lecturing, it was indeed not worth a mention at all.

...

Due to the barrier, it was impossible to see or hear what was happening inside. Thus, those who were outside were unaware of the innumerable breakthroughs in the comprehension of battle techniques occurring within.

Seeing that their principal had gathered all of their candidates together to conduct a lecture, School Head Mo fell into a daze.

"Isn't it a little too late for Principal Zhang to be conducting a lecture at this moment?"

Based on the news he had received, the representatives of the Combat Master Hall would be arriving very soon. To be conducting a lecture now... wasn't it a little too late to be trying to hug the Buddha's leg?

(Hugging the Buddha's leg: This is proverb referring to desperate last-minute attempts.)

"It is indeed a little too late for that..." Zhao Bingxu shook his head.

"The fighting prowess of a cultivator comes from the accumulation of cultivation and battle experience over a long period of time. Just a simple lecture itself can't possibly raise the students' fighting prowess by much. It is probably a last-ditch attempt from Principal Zhang, but it doesn't seem optimistic..." Xu Changqing sighed deeply.

It was not that they didn't believe in Principal Zhang's prowess, but there was a limit to a student's ability to comprehend. Within the span of two hours, no matter how

profound or incredible a teacher's lecture was, it would be futile if the students hardly comprehended a word of it!

In fact, even if they were to comprehend it, it was not guaranteed whether they would be able to utilize it effectively in a real battle or not.

It seemed like their principal was still too young and naive.

"Sigh, but it isn't as if we have any other solution in mind either. Let's just wait and see then..." Shaking his head, Zhao Bingxu fell silent. However, the worry in his eyes was unconcealable.

...

It wasn't just the Ten Great Master Teachers who didn't think Zhang Xuan's efforts were appropriate.

Wo Tianqiong, Shen Pingchao, and Wu Ran also shook their heads after seeing Zhang Xuan's actions.

Indubitably, impartation of knowledge was something that would benefit the students. However, whether it was effective or not was another question.

Knowledge was something that had to be built up, tested, and reinforced over time. If a few lectures could easily raise a person's fighting prowess immensely, wouldn't that mean that just anyone could become an expert of the Combat Master Hall?

Not even the Combat Master Hall had the capability to raise the prowess of their own members that quickly!

Recalling Zhang Xuan's identity, Wu Ran muttered meaningfully, "Perhaps... he is just reluctant to admit defeat!"

One must know that he was an incredible genius who had the capability and courage to point out even Kong shi's flaws!

It was natural that a person like him would be prideful. It was inevitable that he would find it hard to accept that his students were far weaker than the other candidates, and Wu Ran could empathize with such an emotion as well.

However, it was futile. No matter how well the other party did for two hours, the only plausible conclusion was failure!

...

Oblivious to the thoughts of the others, Zhang Xuan was busy imparting the essence of the simplified version of the Heaven's Path battle technique and his combat experience to them in the most simplified explanation he could come up with, not intending to keep anything from them.

He was imparting the exact same knowledge that he had imparted to Wang Ying and the others, disregarding whether they were his direct disciples or not.

"Speed is not everything in combat. The person who is able make his move faster than the other may not necessarily claim the advantage in the battle. What is more important is to understand the intent and purpose behind your opponent's move, because only through knowing that will you be able to prepare yourself and make countermeasures in advance..." Zhang Xuan spoke calmly, his tone carrying a unique rhythm to it that piqued one's attention.

The Heart of a Teacher paired with his Soul Depth comparable to a 7-star master teacher allowed the knowledge he explained to penetrate deep into the mind of the students, allowing them to understand just by hearing, accomplish just by understanding, and master just by accomplishing.

The amount of spiritual energy in the surroundings is insufficient...

As the students before him comprehended the essence of his impartation, their zhenqi began to palpitate in excitement, and their mastery over their battle techniques rose swiftly. However, in face of such a situation, not only was Zhang Xuan not delighted, he even frowned instead.

In order to master a battle technique, not only must one comprehend the essence of it, the zhenqi circulation pathway for it must also be paved entirely.

Most powerful battle techniques had their own unique zhenqi circulation pathways, and if one didn't drive zhenqi through it often, it was extremely easy for it to become blocked.

This was also the reason one was sometimes unable to fully execute a battle technique

despite comprehending the essence of it. After all, not everyone possessed the Heaven's Path zhenqi, which could travel through any meridian easily without being impeded.

As such, the cultivation of battle techniques involved the driving of zhenqi as well, so naturally, one would have to consume spiritual energy as well. Considering that Zhang Xuan's lecture had caused so many students to achieve breakthroughs one after another, the spiritual energy within the barrier was running low.

If this continued, the students could very well find themselves being disturbed in the midst of their comprehension due to the lack of spiritual energy to fuel their zhenqi circulation.

Once that happened, it would be extremely difficult for them to return back to their state of comprehension once more.

In a sense, this was similar to musing over one's sudden inspiration, where disturbance could break one's train of thought, causing one to lose their grasp over their comprehension.

Narrowing his eyes, Zhang Xuan swiftly took out the Earth Vein Spirit Essence and flicked droplets of it from the tip of his finger to the acupoints of the students.

While the spiritual energy within high-tier spirit stones was purer, it was more difficult to absorb, making it less effective in comparison.

At this point, he was running low on Earth Vein Spirit Essence, but this was a crucial moment, and he couldn't afford to hesitate.

Tzzz la la!

The students, who were in the midst of their comprehension, suddenly felt a resurgence of energy. Their understanding of their battle techniques swiftly deepened, and the meridians that had been closed previously also suddenly opened up entirely.

Infused within the spirit essence wasn't just concentrated spiritual energy but a tinge of Heaven's Path zhenqi as well. Under the effects of Heaven's Path zhenqi, the students were able to overcome the previous blocks easily.

"Hmm?" Heaving a sigh of relief, Zhang Xuan was just about to continue his lecture when he suddenly frowned and look into the distance.

Beneath the vast blue sky, a massive aerial saint beast could be seen whizzing through the air. In just a few moments, it was already floating right above the academy.

The representatives from the Combat Master Hall are here. It has only been an hour though...

Zhang Xuan had thought that he would have two whole hours to lecture, but just an hour in, the representatives of the Combat Master Hall had already arrived.

"Alright, I shall end the lecture here!"

Stopping his lecture, the students within the barrier gradually roused from their trance.

After all of them had recovered, Zhang Xuan raised his hand and removed the barrier.

With this, the Combat Master Selection... had commenced!

Chapter 932

The Selection Process

The saint beast was massive, more than a dozen meters long. It had a dark blue body, which contrasted with its fiery-red wings that harnessed blazing flames. Before the saint beast even arrived, the crowd on the training grounds could already feel an incredible heat emanating from it.

There were around a dozen men who stood on top of the saint beast, but as if they were rooted to the spot, their posture didn't budge in the slightest despite the movements of the saint beast.

"The heat can be vividly felt even from such a far distance away... how can anyone ride on that saint beast?"

Many master teachers were bewildered by the sight before them.

Even from where they stood, the heat already felt unbearable. If they were to really sit on the back of the saint beast, wouldn't they be reduced to dried meat in an instant?

"Furthermore... have you all noticed that there is no room on top of that saint beast?" someone amid the crowd exclaimed.

It was then that everyone realized that the saint beast's back didn't have the usual room that would be attached for transportation purposes, so that the passengers could avoid the wind resulting from the flight and travel in comfort.

Without the room, it meant that one would have to stand without any support or protection from the flames on the saint beast's back. It might still be endurable for a short journey, but it would be nothing short of a torture for a long journey. Those who possessed weaker cultivation or minds would surely find themselves collapsing under the ordeal.

"This is a method used by the Combat Master Hall to temper their members. Even when travelling around, they are expected to continue their training," Wo Tianqiong muttered.

"Indeed. The Combat Master Hall is extremely strict on its members, pushing them to cultivate at every possible opportunity, not allowing them to show the slightest bit of laziness. To them, even journeying can be used as a form of cultivation," Shen Pingchao said.

After many years as the principals of Master Teacher Academies, they had come into contact with the Combat Master Hall on many occasions, thus granting them a glimpse into the habits and behavior of combat masters.

It was due to their persistence in training that the members of the Combat Master Hall were able to grow so strong.

"If I am not mistaken, that is the Saint realm 3-dan Inferno Phoenix Saint Beast, known to possess the bloodline of the Divine Phoenix. The temperature of the flames on its back is on par with that of earth flames, and if one can withstand the heat of the flames for a prolonged period of time, one's physical body will be enhanced significantly, and the purity of one's zhenqi will also be refined further," Wu Ran remarked.

It was not sufficient for the members of the Combat Master Hall to possess superior talent; more importantly, they had to be able to devote their everything to their training!

Looking at all of that, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but nod in agreement.

Talent did grant one a starting line ahead of the others, but if one was unwilling to put in the hard work, one would never be able to get to the end.

Taking him for example, even though the cultivation technique he practiced was the Heaven's Path Divine Art, granting him a great advantage over other cultivators, he never allowed himself to slack in his cultivation. Everything that he knew he had to do, he would accomplish with all of his effort, not allowing the slightest opportunity for a slip-up to occur.

Hu la!

Amid the commotion beneath, the aerial saint beast flapped its wings and gradually landed on the training ground.

Thirteen men dressed in master teacher robes leaped off the top of the aerial saint beast.

Their master teacher robes were tight-fitting, as opposed to the loose ones that master teachers usually wore, and inscribed on the emblems pinned on their chests was a sword instead. Looking at it from afar, one couldn't help but feel the chilling aura of a sharp sword.

The one who stood at the very center was a middle-aged man who seemed to be in his forties. He exuded an air of valiance, and the powerful aura he emanated revealed the immense strength he wielded.

He was a Saint 2-dan realm expert, but his presence felt far more overwhelming than ordinary cultivators of his cultivation, reminiscent of an unsheathed sharp blade.

His cultivation might have been beneath Wu Ran, but there was little doubt that Wu Ran be the one to ultimately lose in a real duel.

"Formidable!" Zhang Xuan remarked as he turned his gaze toward the other members of the representative party.

Suddenly, he caught sight of two familiar faces, and his eyes lit up.

They were Lu Cheng and Wu Xu, whom he had met in the valley back when he was attempting to pick the Scarlet Firefly Fruits. He had guessed that they were combat masters previously, and it seemed his deduction was spot-on.

The duo felt very different from two months ago. Their cultivation felt significantly stronger, and their zhenqi seemed to be much purer as well. Wu Xu had even successfully achieved a breakthrough from Chrysalis realm pinnacle to Half-Saint.

Even though it hadn't been long since Wu Xu had made the breakthrough, the energy he harnessed within his body felt vast like the ocean, as if it was undepletable.

It seems like my suggestion worked out for him, Zhang Xuan thought with a chuckle.

Wu Xu had been intending to use the Scarlet Firefly Fruit to attempt a breakthrough previously, but Zhang Xuan had chosen to not sell it to him. Instead, he had sold the other party his Earth Vein Spirit Essence.

Through making use of the easy absorbability of the spiritual energy harnessed within the Earth Vein Spirit Essence to fuel his zhenqi, he was able to build up the momentum required for a breakthrough and successfully reached Half-Saint.

"Zhang shi!" Just when he noticed the duo, the duo also noticed him and bowed respectfully.

Combat masters tended to be arrogant due to their superior fighting prowess, but they shared great respect for experts stronger than them as well.

Even though Zhang shi had only been at the Ethereal Treading realm, he had been able to subdue them easily. His fighting prowess had already way surpassed theirs, reaching a terrifying level. In face of such a genius, they dared not show the slightest disrespect to him.

The four principals stood up and introduced themselves.

"I am the principal of the Yunxu Master Teacher Academy, Wo Tianqiong (...the principal of the Luoqing Master Teacher Academy, Shen Pingchao;... the principal of the Qingzhu Master Teacher Academy, Wu Ran;... the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, Zhang Xuan). Pleased to meet you, combat masters!"

The middle-aged man also hurriedly stepped forward and clasped his fist respectfully. "I am a Hundred Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall, Zhuo Qingfeng!"

Even though he was from the Combat Master Hall and possessed superior fighting prowess, the standing of the four principals was still above his, so he would still have to keep up with the formalities.

"So, it's Zhuo shi!" Wo Tianqiong chuckled. "I have long heard of you. A blade to level three rivers, a breath to sweep nine provinces! Once, you pursued the Five Bandits of Qingyuan with a single sword in hand for ten years straight; in all that time, they didn't dare return to their den. That grand feat of yours has won the respect of this old man!"

Hearing that the principal of the number one academy beneath Qingyuan Conferred Empire had heard of his name, Zhuo Qingfeng responded with a soft chuckle. "Principal Wo, you are too courteous. Those are just insignificant deeds!"

"There is no need to be humble. The fact that you were able to become a Hundred Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall is testimony to your strength." Wo Tianqiong stroked his beard with a smile.

Knowing that Wo Tianqiong was only trading pleasantries to soothe the situation, Zhuo Qingfeng replied with a polite smile before getting to the matter at hand. "I had

a message delivered to Principal Wo some time ago, so I believe everyone present should be aware of the changes in the slots by now!"

"Yes, we have heard that the Combat Master Hall will be taking in a hundred combat masters in this selection," Shen Pingchao and the others replied.

Wo Tianqiong had informed them of the matter some time ago. This was good news, since it meant that more of their students would be able to join the Combat Master Hall.

"Indeed. However, I would first like to clarify that this doesn't mean that our selection criteria will be any less strict, but instead, it will be even harsher than before!" Zhao Qingfeng said with a nod.

"Harsher than before?" The few principals traded glances with one another, and Zhang Xuan stepped forward and asked, "May I know the format that the selection exercise will be in? How does the Combat Master Hall intend to conduct it?"

"The norm in the previous few selections was to conduct an elimination tournament, where the candidates would duel one another, and the remaining fifty would be brought into the Combat Master Hall," Zhuo Qingfeng said.

Wo Tianqiong and the others nodded.

While the rules regarding the Combat Master Selection might differ from time to time, the crux of it still usually revolved around an elimination tournament between the candidates in the form of duels, and the remaining candidates would be brought into the Combat Master Hall.

"Such a tournament format means that each candidate will have to fight several battles. Not only is it time-consuming, those who are injured in prior battles due to facing a stronger enemy will be unable to exert their full strength in the subsequent battles as well. As such, we have decided to try a different selection process this time around."

The previous elimination tournament format aimed to sieve out the strongest ten from a total of eighty candidates from the Four Great Master Teacher Academies in each grade. In other words, each person would have to fight a minimum of three battles.

Considering that the cultivation of every candidate was equal, every single battle would be tough, requiring each candidate to utilize their full strength in order to emerge victorious. By the time they finished the three rounds, most would already be a step into their grave.

In fact, there were occasions where a candidate who possessed the potential to enter the top ten was eliminated in the first round due to meeting an extraordinarily powerful opponent. Even on the off chance that the candidate won, they would still be eventually eliminated due to the severe injuries they had sustained early into the tournament.

This wasn't just a loss for the Four Great Master Teacher Academies but for the Combat Master Hall as well.

However, such had been the case for many years, so upon hearing that the selection format would be changed, Wo Tianqiong, Shen Pingchao, and Wu Ran couldn't help but glance at one another in bewilderment.

It was undeniable that an elimination tournament had its flaws, but it was also one of the few methods that most cultivators viewed to be fair and could accept the results. If the new selection format wasn't viewed to be as fair as an elimination tournament, the candidates might find it hard to accept their elimination, and that could pose many problems as well.

However, the trio didn't remain perplexed for too long.

"The new selection format is simpler and faster. Instead of an elimination tournament among the candidates, the members of our Combat Master Hall will be the ones to fight and assess the capability of the candidates. If a candidate is able to withstand three blows from one of our members of the same cultivation, they will have cleared the selection!" Zhuo Qingfeng explained.

"Three blows?" Hearing those words, Wo Tianqiong and the others frowned.

While this selection process did sound much simpler, in truth, the difficulty had been hiked up.

Others might have been unaware of the fearsome might that members of the Combat Master Hall possessed, but having served as the principals of their respective academies for many years, they knew very well that the prowess that each combat

master wielded could be considered invincible among those of their cultivation realm. The candidates they had chosen and trained were strong, but in a real duel against a combat master, three blows... it was rather doubtful whether they would be able to withstand it or not.

Noting the frowns on the principals' faces, Zhuo Qingfeng assured, "Don't worry, I have already instructed them to standardize the force they use for each candidate, and I will also be keeping watching myself. There won't be any situation where a combat master goes easy or makes things difficult for a specific candidate!"

Hearing those words, Wo Tianqiong and the others replied with smiles, "We don't doubt the Combat Master Hall's integrity."

There was no reason for the Combat Master Hall to compromise the credibility of their own selection exercise, so there was no need to worry about that.

Waving his hand, Zhuo Qingfeng said calmly, "Since that's the case, let us start the selection right now so that we can end it as soon as possible!"

"Alright!" At the other party's urging, the principals hesitated for a brief moment before nodding in agreement.

After everything they had done to prepare their candidates for a battle against the other candidates, it turned out that the Combat Master Hall would be invigilating the selection themselves, catching them completely off-guard.

While this selection format was rather unorthodox, it wasn't without its advantages. It was impossible for their candidates to defeat the combat masters, but if it was just three blows, considering the strength of their own candidates, they should still be able to grit their teeth and persevere to the end.

"Xu Tai and Chen Zhu, you two will be assessing the Grade-1 candidates!" Zhuo Qingfeng instructed.

"Yes!"

Two young men clasped their fists and stepped out from the group.

Both of them looked to be around seventeen or eighteen, and their cultivation was equivalent to the Grade-1 students, Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle. However, they

commanded a threateningly sharp aura, which sent one's alarm bells ringing.

"Allow me to go first!" the young man on the left, Xu Tai, said to his companion on the right, Chen Zhu, before leaping onto the dueling platform. Surveying the Grade-1 candidates standing beneath the dueling platform, he announced, "Any Grade-1 candidate who is able to withstand three blows from me will be deemed to have cleared the selection examination!"

After saying those words, he flicked his wrist and wielded a sword. The cold glint reflected off the sword, inducing shivers in one's body.

At the same time, his aura also began to surge. Despite being only at Consonant Spirit realm, his aura seemed to create a huge pressure that penetrated straight into one's soul. It felt that even a Cosmos Bridge realm would be unable to rival him.

"Formidable..."

"I thought that Yunxu's candidates were plenty scary, but to think that the combat masters would be even more frightening! To be able to cultivate in the Consonant Spirit realm to such an extent... as expected of combat masters!"

"Indeed. Even with my Cosmos Bridge cultivation, I don't think that I would be able to defeat him..."

Feeling the powerful air shrouding Xu Tai, everyone's expression subconsciously tensed.

Chapter 933

Zhu Jian Makes a Move

Consonant Spirit realm, this was the realm where a cultivator would first come into contact with matters relating to the soul, as well as the first hurdle that one would face on the long journey to becoming a true expert. Typically speaking, no matter how much a cultivator reinforced their cultivation, there was still a limit to the strength one could wield at Consonant Spirit realm. Yet, the aura of the combat master on the dueling platform felt heavy like a towering mountain, far surpassing the conventional boundaries of a normal Consonant Spirit realm cultivator.

"Allow me to go first!"

Amongst the crowd beneath, a masculine voice suddenly sounded, and a young man leaped onto the stage.

"It's Zhao Zhongchuan of Yunxu! In the internal selections, he was ranked sixth!"

"To be ranked sixth strongest in Yunxu, there is no doubt that he will be able to clear the selection!"

"Indeed. This will also be a good opportunity for us to see the prowess of that Combat Master Xu so that we can prepare ourselves in advance!"

"Un. It is a huge disadvantage to go first, given that one doesn't have concrete information on the opponent's prowess yet. However, given Zhao Zhongchuan's strength, it shouldn't be difficult for him to withstand three blows!"

...

Upon seeing the young man, hushed whispers immediately spread beneath the stage.

Many of the Grade-1 candidates were staring at the dueling platform intently, unwilling to miss a single second of the battle.

Previously, Zhao Zhongchuan had displayed astounding prowess in the power display,

and even among all eighty candidates from the four Master Teacher Academies, he would easily rank within the top fifteen.

In other words, even in the usual elimination tournament format, he would have been able to clear the Combat Master Selection.

With such a powerful candidate going up first, the other candidates would be able to assess the full extent of the prowess that Xu Tai wielded so that they could possibly take precautions for their turn.

Upon seeing Zhao Zhongchuan, Xu Tai flicked his sword slightly and asked nonchalantly, "Where is your weapon?"

Despite his overwhelming strength, he didn't show the slightest complacency or underestimate his opponent.

"It's here!" Flicking his wrist, Zhao Zhongchuan wielded a saber, and flicking it lightly, a powerful gust of wind whipped up in the surroundings.

"Begin!"

Knowing that his opponent was stronger than him, Zhao Zhongchuan immediately dashed forward to grasp the initiative so as to control the tide of battle. At the same time, he flung his saber furiously, and saber qi shot forth furiously from his blade, filling the area several dozen meters ahead of him completely with saber qi.

"Not bad!"

Wo Tianqiong had been slightly worried when he saw Zhao Zhongchuan volunteering to head up first. However, upon seeing this sight, he heaved a sigh of relief.

This was the strongest technique that Zhao Zhongchuan had in his arsenal. Under its relentless attacks, even a Cosmos Bridge realm would have to back down for the time being or risk being fatally wounded.

Knowing that the crux of the duel lay not in defeating his opponent but withstanding three blows, Zhao Zhongchuan didn't bother taking the risk to try out his opponent first, deciding instead to use his strongest move so as to suppress his opponent right from the start. From this, it could be seen that he wasn't an inflexible person.

"Not too bad, but still too slow!"

In face of the endless saber qi, Xu Tai didn't panic in the slightest. Instead, with a light chuckle, he suddenly made a swift maneuver, which made his figure disappear entirely from the spot. A moment later, he abruptly reappeared before Zhao Zhongchuan and did a light jab with his sword.

Ding!

Feeling a massive might gushing toward him furiously, sealing the movements of his saber, Zhao Zhongchuan was forced to retreat several steps, and a stifled sensation welled up in his chest from the abrupt termination of his battle technique.

"Drats!"

Seeing that the other party had managed to overcome his strongest technique with just a single jab, Zhao Zhongchuan was alarmed. He immediately tried to retreat to a safe location to regain his footing in the battle, but a cold glint flashed across his eyes, and all of a sudden, a bone-chilling sword was pressed right against his neck.

With his sword pointed directly toward Zhao Zhongchuan's neck, Xu Tai said impassively, "You have lost."

"I... have lost?" Zhao Zhongchuan's face turned pale.

The other party had managed to corner him with just two moves, leaving him devoid of an opportunity to retaliate at all. If this had been a life-and-death duel, his head would have already rolled.

"T-this..."

"Zhao Zhongchuan has lost?"

"If he could only withstand two moves, doesn't that mean that... there is no hope for us?"

...

The faces of the crowd below turned grim.

Zhao Zhongchuan was an existence who could be ranked in the top fifteen among the Grade-1 candidates, and yet, he had fallen within two moves. So, wouldn't that mean that the others stood less of a chance?

"It seems like... the difficulty has indeed been heightened!" Wo Tianqiong clenched his fists tightly upon seeing this sight.

He had thought that with the revised rules, it would be easier for all of the candidates to clear the selection. After all, it was only three moves! However, it seemed like he had underestimated the difficulty of the matter.

Combat masters were simply too much stronger than the other cultivators of the same cultivation realm, to the point that it was despair-inducing.

"How are we supposed to fight against that?" Zhu Jian muttered despondently.

Zhao Zhongchuan was far superior to him in terms of zhenqi purity and complexity of moves, and yet, the other party had still been unable to withstand three moves from the combat master. If he were to go up, he had no doubt that he would be utterly defeated.

It seemed like... his dream of becoming a combat master was going to come to a halt.

"Let me give it a try!"

At that moment, another young man leaped onto the dueling platform.

Zhu Jian recognized the young man. The latter was one of the top students from the Luoqing Master Teacher Academy, having placed third in their internal selections. He had also participated in the power display earlier, and his pair of golden and silver rings were capable of performing consecutive lethal attacks.

With Zhu Jian's current strength, even two of him combined wouldn't be a match for the young man.

Ding ding ding!

While Zhu Jian was still deep in thought, the duel on the platform began.

This time, Xu Tai was the one to take the first move. With a flick of his sword, he

charged toward the young man with furious momentum.

It was as if Xu Tai's movements were precisely measured with a ruler; there weren't any excessive motions in his movements at all. In the first move, he accurately breached the defense of the double rings his opponent had put up. In the second, he managed to get into close quarters with his opponent, and in the third, his sword accurately pierced into his opponent's chest. It wasn't too deep, but fresh blood still flowed profusely from the wound.

"I admit defeat!" The face of the young man from Luoqing paled.

Had the other party not gone easy on him and exerted just a bit more strength, he would have been a lifeless corpse by now.

He had thought that he would have been able to stand his ground with his strength, but to think that... he hadn't been able to withstand three moves either.

As the young man walked down the dueling platform, the atmosphere among the crowd suddenly grew extremely heavy. Everyone looked at one another with an awful complexion.

It was one thing for Zhao Zhongchuan to have lost—he was only ranked fifteen among all of the candidates—but the young man from Luoqing could definitely get into the top ten with his strength. Yet, to think that even he would be unable to withstand three moves. The difficulty of the test had far exceeded their expectations!

Previously, there had been a few who were still harboring hopes that, as long as they were to grit their teeth and endure the three moves, they would be able to clear the test. But from the looks of it, such thoughts had been too naive.

"Allow me!"

Another candidate leaped onto the dueling platform.

This candidate was skilled in defensive and evasive maneuvers, and as soon as the battle begun, he began skirting around the dueling platform, hoping to drag the battle beyond three moves. However, Xu Tai was far swifter than the candidate had expected.

With just two moves, Xu Tai had already cornered him and knocked him off the dueling platform with severe wounds.

This fellow sure is a difficult opponent to deal with. He has no particularly major flaws that one can easily exploit against him, Zhang Xuan noted with a grim expression.

As expected of a combat master! Xu Tai's speed, strength, and defense were nearly impeccable. Had Zhang Xuan faced him as a Consonant Spirit realm cultivator as well, he would have had to take at least a single move in order to defeat the other party!

Fearsome!

Considering how Zhang Xuan could easily rival opponents with cultivation far beyond his, it was indeed rare for him to require one whole move in order to subdue an opponent of the same cultivation realm.

Of course, if he were to use the Eye of Insight or the Library of Heaven's Path, he should have been able to destroy the other party in half a move.

Soon, more and more candidates went up to the dueling platform, but each and every one of them were defeated. It was not until the tenth candidate that a person finally managed to withstand three blows with great difficulty.

That candidate was ranked first within Qingzhu's internal selection, and he was known to be invincible among the Grade-1 students. Yet, a person of his caliber had barely managed to clear the selection.

The combat master on the dueling platform, Xu Tai, was indeed a little, no, far too powerful.

"Is there anyone else?"

It didn't take long for the selection to come to a standstill. There were still many candidates who hadn't gone up yet, but after witnessing the fearsome prowess that Xu Tai possessed, they dared not stand up.

"Candidates from Yunxu, Luoqing, and Qingzhu have stood up and faced me, but I don't seem to have faced any from Hongyuan yet. Is there anyone from Hongyuan who wishes to give a try? Or could it be that you don't even have the courage to do so? If that's the case, why even bother coming for this Combat Master Selection?" Xu Tai sneered as he turned his sight toward the candidates from Hongyuan's side.

The candidates from the other three academies had already tried their luck, and it was

only the candidates from Hongyuan who had remained motionless, none going up to challenge him at all.

"This..." Hearing Xu Tai's words, the faces of the Grade-1 candidates from Hongyuan flushed crimson in embarrassment.

They knew full well where they stood. They wouldn't be a match for even Zhao Zhongchuan and the others, so they would only be making a fool out of themselves even if they were to head up.

"Forget it, I will go. What else can happen other than defeat?" Seeing that no one was willing to make a move, Zhu Jian clenched his jaws and volunteered himself.

In any case, the worst that could happen was a loss. Given that the other party had specifically named Hongyuan, if they continued to cower with lowered heads, they would only become sinners who had brought shame to the academy.

They might be weak, but they mustn't become cowards!

Stepping forward, Zhu Jian leaped onto the stage.

"Not bad, it seems like you still have some guts." Xu Tai chuckled softly. "Take out your weapon!"

"Weapon? There is no need for that. I shall face you with my bare hands," Zhu Jian replied with a shake of his head.

His loss was already sealed, so there would be no difference whether he used a weapon or not. Since that was the case, he might as well save a bit of strength.

"You aren't going to use a weapon? I will just say this in advance, I won't go easy on you just because you are unarmed!" Seeing that his opponent wasn't intending to use a weapon, Xu Tai shook his head, but it seemed like he had no intention of casting aside his sword due to it.

Instead, he flicked his wrist, and a piercing shrill echoed in the air.

Tzz la!

Innumerable sword qi slashed through the air, headed toward Zhu Jian.

Xu Tai didn't go easy on Zhu Jian just because the latter was unarmed. Just as he'd done with the other candidates, he went at the latter at his full strength right from the start.

The sword qi harnessed a bone-chilling aura, which left Zhu Jian's goosebumps standing on end before it could even approach, and his face paled in fright.

He had witnessed the other party's swordsmanship several times in the previous battles, and he knew that even if he were to dodge this attack, the other party would swiftly follow up with another strike that would leave him cornered. Sighing deeply, he was just about to surrender and admit defeat when he suddenly recalled Principal Zhang's teachings.

Since the worst thing that can happen is loss, why should I admit defeat? Perhaps, if I try a bit harder, I might just get lucky and clear the test...

As soon as such a thought surfaced in his head, the various insights that Principal Zhang had just explained to him suddenly gushed into his mind like a torrent.

The other party's sword is pure and earnest, seemingly having come right from his heart. According to what Principal Zhang said, in order to unravel such swordsmanship, I will have to examine him closely to assess the purpose and intent behind his swordsmanship, as well as the maximum might he can exert through it.

I have already seen the maximum might of the other party's swordsmanship earlier, and the purpose and intent are clear, too—he intends to overwhelm me with his sword qi so as to limit my movements. If I counterattack, I will be falling into his trap instead.

From the classifications that Principal Zhang listed earlier, the aim of his swordsmanship is to force me to expose an opening, which he can then exploit against me. If I wish to unravel his swordsmanship... I will have to force him force him to err before me!

These thoughts swiftly flowed into Zhu Jian's mind. It might seem complicated, but everything came to him in just an instant.

When Principal Zhang first explained those concepts, it had felt extremely abstract to him. However, utilizing them in a battle now, he suddenly realized that everything the other party had said was truly the utmost essence of combat.

With these realizations, the other party's profound swordsmanship, which he had

been unable to comprehend earlier, suddenly seemed as if it was nothing special at all. Everything was apparent to him, be it the direction of the other party's attack or his possible future maneuvers. It was as if all of its secrets had been laid bare to him.

Principal Zhang said that the best way to deal with such a move is...

Gritting his teeth, Zhu Jian faced the other party's swordsmanship without dodging at all. Instead, he squeezed his body together while directing his forefinger forward abruptly.

Puchi!

Zhu Jian felt as if his finger had managed to strike something, and in a moment of fluster, he hurriedly took a step back before taking a closer look at what had happened.

It was only then that he realized that Xu Tai, whom he was fighting with, was lying on the ground with his eyes rolled back, spurting large mouthfuls of blood on the ground.

"This..."

Seeing the fellow, whom so many experts before had been unable to defeat, lying on the ground after just a casual finger jab from him, Zhu Jian was dumbfounded.

At this point, there was only one thought in his mind...

Is this a sham accident to scam me of my wealth?

Chapter 934

Chen Zhu

It was completely beyond Zhu Jian's imagination that he would be able to defeat the other party.

He had seen the other party's prowess clearly from below earlier, superior sword mastery paired with sharp and deadly moves. Even three of him combined wouldn't be a match for the other party! That was also the reason he had hesitated until the final moment before going up onto the dueling platform, and it was only upon recalling Principal Zhang's teaching that he counterattacked.

Principal Zhang's lecture had covered how one could deal with a person whose strength, swordsmanship, and reflexes were nigh perfect. Back then, he had thought that he would never have an opportunity to encounter such a fearsome opponent, so he hadn't thought much of it. Never in his wildest dreams could he have imagined that doing exactly as Principal Zhang had instructed would produce such miraculous effects!

To incapacitate the opponent with a single finger... Was this for real? Wasn't this too easy?

Was that fellow really the same formidable expert whom even Zhao Zhongchuan couldn't withstand three moves from?

"H-h-h-how can this be? W-w-w-what happened?"

"I have no idea too, but it seems like Combat Master Xu Tai has been defeated..."

"So many experts who have gone before couldn't even withstand three moves from him, and yet, that fellow was able to defeat him?"

"Aren't the candidates from the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy the weakest of us here? But this... What is this situation here?"

While Zhu Jian had blanked out on the dueling platform, the crowd below went

completely mad.

Each of them had their eyes bulging and lower jaws touching the ground, as if they had seen a ghost.

It was just a moment ago that the Four Great Master Teacher Academies had conducted a power display of their candidates, so everyone had a rough gauge of the strength of one another.

The person who was standing on the dueling platform at this very moment, Zhu Jian, couldn't even be ranked amid the top fifty of the eighty of them. Yet, he had actually managed to subdue Xu Tai with a single jab? How could such a huge change in his fighting prowess suddenly come about?

...

"You cheated!"

After coughing several mouthfuls of blood, Xu Tai finally managed to catch his breath and recover. Standing up, he glared coldly at the young man before him with savagery reminiscent of a ferocious beast.

To think that he, an esteemed combat master, would be defeated by a person who was inferior to him on all aspects, be it zhenqi, strength, or reflexes... Not to mention, he had even been defeated by a simple finger jab. It was not difficult to imagine the indignation and rage he felt at that very moment.

"I..." Zhu Jian was stunned. He had truly no idea how he could explain himself.

Even he could not understand how he had managed to defeat the other party, so even he himself felt that he had cheated.

But yet, it had indeed been a fair duel. Furthermore, he had gone empty-handed against an armed opponent, so in such a sense, his victory was indisputable.

"Do you dare to have another match with me?" Xu Tai spat through gritted teeth.

Zhu Jian hesitated for a brief moment before eventually nodding. "Fine."

In truth, Xu Tai wasn't the only one who had such a thought in mind. Many of the

candidates below also shared the same view as him. As such, even if Zhu Jian were to insist that he was the victor and win, his victory would be thought of as dishonorable.

"This time, I won't go easy on you anymore..."

Hearing Zhu Jian agreeing to the duel, Xu Tai roared furiously as his sword warped into a massive dragon, charging at Zhu Jian with astounding momentum.

This battle technique was even more fearsome than the sword art he had executed in the previous duel. Even before the sword approached Zhu Jian, the dueling platform had already been torn apart by the sword qi emanating from it.

In face of the other party's immeasurably powerful stab, Zhu Jian swiftly recalled the teachings from their principal. The situation is identical to before, and Principal Zhang has also explained the countermeasures to take when faced with such a move...

As such, he nimbly twisted his body to the side before wielding his finger like a sword and stabbing toward a specific direction.

Puchi!

The finger, imbued with zhenqi, sunk deeply into flesh like a dagger.

In the next moment, the majestic Xu Tai collapsed to the ground once more. His face paled, and large quantities of blood spilled from his mouth.

In fact, his state seemed to be even worse than before, as blood spewed from his mouth profusely like a human fountain.

In that moment, a wave of silence swept across the crowd, and not a person could speak a word.

"He... was defeated again?"

"He used his full might this time around, but he was still defeated in a single move. Could it be that Zhu Jian has been concealing his cultivation all along?"

"I really can't tell. His move was simply too profound."

The three champions of the Grade-1 internal selections of the other three academies

glanced at one another as cold sweat trickled down their cheeks.

Previously, they hadn't even thought of Hongyuan's students as opponents. They had thought that, considering the caliber of Hongyuan's candidates, they wouldn't even claim a single slot of the twenty. Yet, never had they thought that even a seemingly inconspicuous candidate from Hongyuan would be able to defeat a combat master so easily.

"You... You..." Struggling to his feet with difficulty, Xu Tai pointed a shaking finger at Zhu Jian furiously.

He really couldn't accept his defeat! Even until this point, he still had no idea how the other party had managed to outmaneuver him.

To think that a combat master like him, an unrivalled existence among cultivators, would be defeated by an opponent of the same cultivation without knowing the reason behind it! This inconceivable situation left him extremely frenzied.

Seeing that Xu Tai was unwilling to back down, Zhuo Qingfeng harrumphed coldly. "Xu Tai, that is enough! Don't you think that you have embarrassed yourself enough for today?"

"Leader, I..." Xu Tai turned to Zhuo Qingfeng anxiously, unwilling to let this matter slide just like that.

"That young man over there might not be able to measure up to you in terms of zhenqi and strength, but his comprehension of battle techniques and grasp over timing in combat are far beyond yours. That finger jab he executed might seem humble and unimpressive, but it is a move that can only be made with a deep understanding of your swordsmanship and zhenqi circulation!" With the sharp eyes that Zhuo Qingfeng possessed, he could easily see through the crux of the battle.

"Using his finger as a sword, he was able to bait an opening out of you before exploiting it with impeccable timing. With just the eye of discernment he possesses, he is qualified to become a combat master!"

"Yes." Seeing that even his leader had spoken up for the other party, Xu Tai dared not argue any further. As such, he could only nod meekly and back down.

"I... cleared the selection?"

Zhu Jian had gone up to the dueling platform without harboring any hope of victory at all, so when he heard that he had cleared the selection, he could hardly believe his ears.

"The criterion of our selection is for the candidate to withstand three moves from one of our combat masters. Given that you have defeated our combat master, who else should we clear if not you?" Zhuo Qingfeng replied with a kind smile.

"Yes!" Excited, Zhu Jian nodded his head hurriedly before leaping off the stage.

"Alright. Xu Tai, you should rest for a moment first. Chen Zhu, you will take his place."

Combat masters were powerful, but they weren't unmatched in the truest sense. At the very least, when Zhuo Qingfeng was at Consonant Spirit realm, Xu Tai was no match for him at all.

From time to time, there would be a formidable genius emerging from the Four Great Master Teacher Academies who would be able to defeat their combat master. It might have been a rare sight, but it wasn't something too surprising. As such, Zhuo Qingfeng didn't think too much about it and instructed for the test to continue.

"Yes!" Chen Zhu nodded before leaping up to the dueling platform. Gazing down on the crowd beneath, he said, "Is there anyone who dares battle with me? The same rules apply. As long as you are able to withstand three moves from me, you will be qualified to become a combat master!"

The weapon that Chen Zhu wielded was a sharp saber. Paired with his powerful aura and torrential zhenqi, the crowd couldn't help but shiver at the thought of the might he would be able to produce.

In comparison to Tai Xu, this Chen Zhu seemed to be even stronger and scarier!

"If I knew that he was so powerful, I would have gone up earlier..."

"That won't make any difference. Even Zhao Zhongchuan was unable to withstand three moves from Combat Master Xu Tai, do you think that you would have been able to do better than him?"

"I wonder who will be able to withstand three moves from him."

...

Feeling the frightening strength that Chen Zhu emanated, apprehension swiftly swept across the faces of the crowd.

Xu Tai was already a difficult opponent to deal with, and the substitution with the stronger Chen Zhu spelled nothing but disaster for the subsequent challengers.

"Allow me!"

A young man leaped onto the dueling platform.

"It's the champion of Luoqing's internal selection, Zhang Qingshan!"

"Given his formidable might, he might just be able to withstand three moves..."

Upon seeing the face of the first challenger, the crowd beneath immediately directed their gazes intently toward the dueling platform.

Zhang Qingshan was the strongest expert of the Grade-1 students of the Luoqing Master Teacher Academy. Even the Zhao Zhongchuan from before was no match for him at all.

With him making a move, victory was almost assured.

Hu hu hu!

Amidst the discussion, the battle began. Zhang Qingshan split open his fingers and thrust his palm forward. A surge of zhenqi burst forth with the momentum of the relentless tide of a river.

Had it been anyone else, they would have surely been torn apart in an instant by the rampaging surge of zhenqi. However, Chen Zhu was like a small boat amid the furious waves of the ocean; regardless of how violent the storm became, he was able to match its movement perfectly, thus avoiding the brunt of the force.

In the blink of an eye, Chen Zhu had already used up two moves, and both parties were still equally matched.

"How can it be that easy for you to withstand three moves from me?"

Seeing that he had already used up two moves, Chen Zhu narrowed his eyes and harrumphed coldly. All of a sudden, the saber flew out of his hand and tore through space with speed reminiscent of a bolt of lightning.

Huala!

The saber was simply too fast. Before Zhang Qingshan could even react, he could already feel a fiery gale assaulting him from the front, threatening to split his body in half.

"Crap..."

Sensing the immense danger from the saber, Zhang Qingshan narrowed his eyes and retreated furiously. At the same time, he whipped out a sword from his storage ring in order to protect himself.

Peng!

The saber collided with the sword, and the overwhelming force resulting from the clash caused the ground beneath to be devastated. Under the massive might, Zhang Qingshan's face reddened, and a mouthful of blood spurted from his mouth as he flew out of the dueling platform and crashed heavily onto the ground beneath.

"I lost? How could I have lost?"

Lying on the ground, Zhang Qingshan's face was as pale as a sheet of paper, unable to believe what had just happened.

He was the number one expert of the Grade-1 students of the Luoqing Master Teacher Academy, and yet, despite his incredible fighting prowess, he had actually failed to withstand three moves from the other party. Having failed the Combat Master Selection, the overwhelming sense of defeat that weighed down on his heart left him incredibly stifled and frustrated.

"Chen Zhu, what the hell are you doing! What did I tell you before coming here? Didn't I tell you that secret art is forbidden?"

Just as Zhang Qingshan was wallowing in despair from his defeat, Zhuo Qingfeng's wrathful voice suddenly resounded deafeningly across the training ground.

If it had been a normal clash, Zhang Qingshan would surely have been able to withstand the three moves easily. However, who could have known that his subordinate would break the rules and use a forbidden move in the crucial moment?

"I..." Chen Zhu's face reddened.

Watching Xu Tai's defeat with his own eyes had left his heart shaken. When he realized that he was unable to defeat his opponent within three moves, he had suddenly felt a surge of panic, which compelled him to use his secret art.

After lecturing Chen Zhu, Zhuo Qingfeng turned to Shen Pingchao and said, "My apologies, Principal Shen. My subordinate has made a huge mistake. Even though Zhang Qingshan of your Luoqing Master Teacher Academy has lost the duel, he does indeed possess the qualifications to become a combat master!"

"Thank you, Combat Master Zhuo." Hearing that his student was still able to qualify as a combat master, Shen Pingchao heaved a sigh of relief and clasped his fist in gratitude.

Zhu Qingfeng's actions were prompt and courteous, clearly having spared a thought for his honor. As such, he had to reciprocate with at least a word of thanks.

After dealing with Zhang Qingshan's matter, Zhuo Qingfeng raised his hand and said, "Let's continue the test!"

Chen Zhu surveyed the surroundings haughtily and said, "Who else wants to try next?"

Even though Zhang Qingshan had eventually been deemed to have cleared the test, the last saber that had sent Zhang Qingshan flying was simply so powerful that it had instilled apprehension into the hearts of the remaining candidates subconsciously. All those who had intended to go up a moment ago couldn't help but cower fearfully.

Their strength and reflexes were nowhere near Zhang Qingshan's level. If the other party were to use that powerful technique against them too, it would be hard to tell whether or not they would be able to counterattack in time. Most likely, they would suffer severe injuries, or even... be split in two!

Chen Zhu turned his gaze toward the candidates from Hongyuan as he uttered coldly, "What? No one dares to challenge me? If I am not mistaken, so far, there has only been one candidate from Hongyuan, right? Is there anyone there who dares face me?"

His good friend, Xu Tai, had been severely wounded by a student from Hongyuan, so he intended to exact vengeance for him, as well as to return honor to the combat masters. He wanted to make them know that even with just three moves, they, combat masters, were a force that the likes of them couldn't hope to match up to!

"This..."

Hearing Chen Zhu issuing them a challenge publicly, the candidates from Hongyuan glanced at one another hesitantly.

A moment later, a young man clenched his jaws and stepped forward.

"I will face him!"

Saying those words, he leaped onto the dueling platform.

Someone amid the crowd shouted, "Zhu Xi, you finished last place in the internal selections! Aren't you seeking death by going up at a tense moment like this?"

Chapter 935

Crippling With a Kick

There was a total of twenty Grade-1 candidates from the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, and Zhu Xi was ranked twentieth among them. In other words, he was Hongyuan's weakest candidate.

To make things even clearer, if the eighty Grade-1 candidates of the Four Great Master Teacher Academies were arranged in terms of strength, he would be ranked eightieth.

Even Luoqing's champion of the Grade-1 internal selection had been sent flying with a saber, wasn't it practically suicide for a person as weak as Zhu Xi to challenge Chen Zhu?

Everyone couldn't help but stare at him as if he was a fool. There were even a few who couldn't help but cover their eyes, unwilling to see the cringeworthy sight that would unfold very soon.

"Forget it, I will have to go up sooner or later. It is just a question whether I lose now or later." Chuckling softly with an edge of despair in his tone, Zhu Xi leaped onto the dueling platform without any hesitation.

In truth, from the power display itself, he already knew that it was impossible for him to become a combat master with his strength.

But even if he were to lose, he couldn't allow anyone to think of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy as a den of cowards!

"Interesting. To think it would be weaker one who has more guts than the others. Very well! Just try to withstand one move from me, won't you?" Chen Zhu smirked coldly as he licked his lips. Driving his zhenqi, he flicked his saber, and the air whimpered loudly under the sheer pressure of his saber.

"I also hope that I can withstand one move," Zhu Xi muttered before taking a deep breath.

Flicking his wrist, he whipped out a spear as he tried to recall the knowledge that Principal Zhang had imparted to him earlier on.

He had paid careful notice to the duel between Xu Tai and Zhu Jian earlier, and it seemed that the latter had used the techniques that Principal Zhang had taught them. Since the worst possible situation was just failure, he wanted to take a leap of faith and give it a try.

"Begin!"

As soon as the duel started, Zhu Xi immediately opened his eyes wide as he thrust his spear forward abruptly with great momentum.

Principal Zhang has said that the greatest advantage of a spear lies in its reach. When against a shorter weapon, one should make full use of its advantage. An inch shorter, an inch riskier. While the other party's saber does wield incredible strength, it is lacking in reach. I can make use of this to draw in the opponent and make him lower his guard. As the words of their principal resounded in his mind, Zhu Xi pushed his spear forward furiously, creating afterimages after him.

"Humph!" On the other hand, seeing Zhu Xi's offense, Chen Zhu sneered coldly.

With a slash of his saber, a furious burst of saber qi sliced the air before him in two to meet the spear ahead of him.

Now is the time! Seeing that the other party's countermeasure was identical to how Principal Zhang had analyzed, Zhu Xi's eyes lit up as he continued pushing his spear forward. At the same moment, he lifted his leg to kick the other party's groin.

True strikes should always be fixed amid feints in combat. The furious charge of the spear made it seem as if Zhu Xi was intending to capitalize fully on the advantage resulting from the length of his weapon, but the true threat was actually concealed beneath that—his leg.

Principal Zhang had once explained to them the various common flaws a cultivator would tend to expose when executing certain moves. Considering the furious might that the saber in Chen Zhu's hand wielded, it was apparent that the other party had focused all of his might on his upper body. Naturally, this meant that his lower body was open!

Peng!

The crisp sound of a foot sinking deeply into flesh was heard by all, and Chen Zhu instantaneously narrowed his eyes.

"AHHHH!"

He gasped in indescribable pain as his body instinctively leaped up as if shocked by lightning.

After which... his entire body collapsed to the ground, curled up like a shrimp.

As this was the first time Zhu Xi had utilized Zhang Xuan's teachings in battle, not to mention the overwhelming strength of the opponent he was facing, he had inadvertently used his full strength in the kick. Furthermore, the crotch was a huge weakness for any man. With that kick, Zhu Xi had nearly crippled Chen Zhu for life.

"This..." Completely stunned, Zhu Xi scratched his head blankly.

He had only intended to give it a try, thinking that the worst that could possibly come was defeat. He didn't really think that his kick would really be able to strike his opponent's vitals and incapacitate the other party.

Wasn't that fellow extremely powerful?

How did he fall so easily to a kick from him then?

Zhu Xi wasn't the only one who was surprised by this turn of events. The crowd below also stared at one another with eyes widened.

Wasn't that Zhu Xi fellow the weakest of them all?

Yet, the weakest one actually incapacitated Chen Zhu in just two moves?

"T-this..." Even Zhuo Qingfeng himself had stiffened from shock.

Others might not have been able to see through the profoundness behind the maneuver, but as a Hundred Men Commander among the combat masters, he was able to see through it clearly.

Zhu Xi had exerted his full might in his spear, not holding back in the slightest. Facing such an attack, Chen Zhu had also instinctively focused his attention and strength on his upper body to fend off Zhu Xi's spear. It was with such a set-up that Zhu Xi had been able to successfully take Chen Zhu by surprise and land his kick on the latter's groin accurately. But as easy as it sounded, it was not that easy to execute. Without a masterful grasp over one's combat timing, Chen Zhu would have surely noticed the kick in advance and dodged it easily.

Even for a person with Zhuo Qingfeng's mastery of combat, he wouldn't have been able to exploit such a flaw against Chen Zhu either if he were to fight against the latter with his cultivation suppressed.

For the last ranking candidate of Hongyuan to easily achieve a feat that even he was incapable of... what was going on?

"You..."

It took a very long time for Chen Zhu to recover. Getting back to his feet, he glared at Zhu Xi with raging flames burning in his eyes.

He had intended to exact vengeance for his friend, but who would have thought that an even more tragic plight awaited him?

Zhu Xi scratched his head sheepishly. "I don't have any idea how I won either... Do you want to go another round?"

It was just a few moments ago that he had received Principal Zhang's teachings, and there hadn't been sufficient time for him to fully make sense of them. In the battle, he had only executed the moves as Principal Zhang had taught him earlier, so even he himself was unsure of how he had managed to subdue his opponent.

However, this feeling of victory was truly addicting. If the other party wanted to go another round, he was more than willing to accompany him. In any case, this would be a good opportunity to practice and internalize Principal Zhang's teachings.

"You are seeking death!" Seeing how the other party even had the audacity to challenge him after what he had done, Chen Zhu's veins popped out from anger. With a deafening roar, he threw his saber out with astounding momentum.

This was the very same secret move that he had used to defeat Zhang Qingshan earlier!

With his strength augmented by the immense rage coursing through his veins, the flying saber seemed to harness far greater force than before. Slicing through the air furiously, it seemed as if it would have been able to tear apart even a mountain of metal in two easily.

"Formidable..."

Seeing the same move that had left him defeated being executed once more, Zhang Qingshan's face paled in fright, and his body began to tremble uncontrollably.

He couldn't help but imagine his plight had Chen Zhu executed the secret art against him with such force earlier. There was no way he could have gotten off that easily against that! Perhaps, he might have really been split in two by now!

It seemed like the other party had gone easy on him in the duel.

As expected, it is this move...

Upon seeing the flying saber, Zhu Xi didn't panic. Instead, his eyes lit up.

When he had witnessed Chen Zhu executing this move against Zhang Qingshan from below earlier, he had immediately analyzed it carefully with Principal Zhang's teachings out of curiosity, wondering if he could find a flaw in the technique.

To execute this secret art, Chen Zhu had poured his full strength into his saber to launch a decisive blow against him. However, it was in the moment of a powerful offense that one's defense would be the weakest.

As long as he was able to exploit this flaw against Chen Zhu, it shouldn't be too difficult for him to curb the other party's move.

Thus, Zhu Xi raised his spear and jabbed it forward consecutively toward the empty air like serpents leaping at their prey.

Ding ding ding ding!

A series of crisp metallic reverberations rang out as the spear strikes accurately struck the openings of the saber's strike.

The saber did possess overwhelming momentum, but under the several hundred jabs

from Zhu Xi's spear, it was eventually worn out.

Fending off strength with speed!

This was also something that Principal Zhang had talked about in his lecture. Under the circumstances in which one was faced with overwhelming strength far beyond one's means, one could gradually wear their opponent's might thin with continuous light jabs, thus making up for quality with quantity. Even a droplet of water could form a torrent if a sufficient number of them gathered!

Zhu Xi was only intending on giving it a try, but who could have thought that he would actually succeed!

After neutralizing the might of the other party's spear, Zhu Xi charged forward and sent a kick right toward Chen Zhu, just like before!

After executing such a powerful attack, Chen Zhu was in an extremely brief state of frailty, requiring a moment longer before he could regain his momentum.

As the famed saying goes, 'while he's ill, go for the kill!'

Every opportunity in a duel only had a brief window to it, and naturally, Zhu Xi couldn't allow this chance to slip past his fingers.

On the other hand, Chen Zhu had intended to decapitate Zhu Xi with his saber in his moment of wrath, but to his astonishment, the other party had actually managed to neutralize his attack easily and even sent yet another kick toward him. Horrified, Chen Zhu immediately conducted an evasive maneuver to the side, but he suddenly saw a palm enlarge before his eyes.

The kick was a feint, and the true strike lay in the other party's palm!

Pah!

Too preoccupied with dodging the kick, Chen Zhu had left his face completely open. Under the massive force of the palm, his face immediately swelled up as his body tumbled backward uncontrollably.

Zhu Xi had utilized his full strength in the palm strike. While his strength and zhenqi purity were beneath Chen Zhu's, ultimately, he was still at the same cultivation realm

as the latter, Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle, and as a candidate qualified for the Combat Master Selection, he also wielded strength superior to ordinary Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle cultivators.

The strike knocked out more than a dozen teeth from Chen Zhu's mouth, and he crashed headfirst into the ground beneath the dueling platform, his body convulsing uncontrollably.

"I won..." Seeing that he had managed to defeat Chen Zhu once more, Zhu Xi's eyes shone in excitement.

Even though he had memorized every single word that Principal Zhang had said, he had never utilized his teachings in battle before, so he had been unsure of the might harnessed within them. It was only after using them against Chen Zhu that he realized... hell, those moves were truly convenient and exhilarating!

The feeling he felt at this very moment was as if he had gone to an examination knowing the answers and the detailed explanation behind them in advance.

To think that even the lofty combat masters would be nothing compared to Principal Zhang's teachings!

"This..."

"What is going on?"

The many students, elders, and principals from Yunxu, Luoqing, and Qingzhu stared at one another, dumbstruck.

If they could still reason Zhu Xi's victory in the first battle as sheer luck, in the second battle, Chen Zhu had used his strongest technique but had been utterly defeated. It was apparent that there was something very bizarre going on.

"Isn't that fellow the weakest candidate from Hongyuan?"

"If even the weakest candidate from Hongyuan is able to defeat Combat Master Chen Zhu so easily, how strong must their strongest candidate be?"

"I really can't begin to imagine that..."

In the power display earlier, they had clearly seen that not only did the students of Hongyuan possess cultivation inferior to them, their comprehension of combat and battle techniques was also unimpressive. But why would they suddenly become so powerful as soon as the test started? It was as if someone else had taken their places!

This was simply too peculiar!

"Be it Zhu Xi or Zhu Jian, their zhenqi and cultivation are far beneath Xu Tai and Chen Zhu, but they were still able to achieve victory easily. This only goes to show that their comprehension of battle techniques and combat sense have already reached an inconceivable level," Wo Tianqiong said with his eyelids twitching uncontrollably.

He had also thought that Hongyuan's results would be unsatisfactory after watching the power display, but their results had truly exceeded everyone's expectations.

Even the few top candidates from his academy had been unable to withstand three blows from the combat masters, but the candidates from Hongyuan were actually able to defeat the combat masters easily.

"Indeed." Shen Pingchao nodded with a deep frown on his head, unable to comprehend what was going on.

Under normal circumstances, a cultivator's combat sense would usually be attributed to talent, especially considering how abstract a subject it was; there was no such thing as a 'solution' to combat. It was one thing for a candidate with such incredible combat sense to emerge from Hongyuan, but for two to appear simultaneously... The odds of it happening were too unlikely to just play it off as a coincidence.

It took a while for Zhuo Qingfeng to finally recover, and with twitching lips, he announced loudly, "Zhu Xi... is the victor! I hereby announce that he has cleared he selection."

"I succeeded..." Zhu Xi's eyes were gleaming in delight.

He had already given up hope on the matter, but who would have thought that he would successfully become a combat master just by following Principal Zhang's teachings?

"Un. The timing of your movements was extremely precise, allowing you to outmaneuver even Chen Zhu. Naturally, our Combat Master Hall welcomes someone

as talented as you." Zhuo Qingfeng nodded.

It was hard to believe, but facts were facts.

From the very first time that Chen Zhu was kicked in his groin, he had already lost. The second round was no more than a farce.

"Thank you, Combat Master Zhuo!" Zhu Xi hurriedly clasped his fist and thanked Zhu Qingfeng. However, he suddenly realized something at that moment and asked, "If the two Consonant Spirit realm combat masters in charge of invigilating the test of the Grade-1 candidates are injured, how... will the test proceed?"

All in all, including Zhuo Qingfeng, there were thirteen men from the Combat Master Hall.

Putting aside the Half-Saint Wu Xu and Lu Cheng, from Consonant Spirit realm to Chrysalis realm, there were two combat masters to invigilate each of the five grades.

But of the two Consonant Spirit realm combat masters in the party, one of them was still spurting blood after being struck by Zhu Jian, and the other one still had his face planted in the ground. There was no one else to assess the Grade-1 candidates!

"This..."

Seeing that it was unlikely for his subordinates to recover within a short period of time, Zhuo Qingfeng frowned as well.

Chapter 936

How Can We Continue the Test?

He had previously thought that two combat masters for each grade would be more than sufficient to assess all of the candidates.

Who would have thought that the candidates from Hongyuan would wield the power to incapacitate his subordinates? In any case, it didn't seem like the test could continue on like that.

After a moment of hesitation, Zhuo Qingfeng raised his hand and said, "Since that is the case... Xu Hong and Ye Jun, suppress your cultivation to Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle. You two will be assessing the Grade-1 candidates!"

"Yes!" Two young man clasped their fists and stepped forward.

The both of them were at Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle, and in their eyes, one could vaguely see a bridge connected with the world. With just a look, it was apparent that they had immersed themselves within this cultivation realm for a very long time, and they wielded strength far superior to ordinary cultivators.

Zhuo Qingfeng raised his hand, and the zhenqi from his body gushed out and shrouded the duo.

Pilipala!

In just a few short moments, the cultivation of the duo plummeted to Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle.

Wo Tianqiong frowned. "Combat Master Zhuo, won't having a Cosmos Bridge realm cultivator fight against Consonant Spirit realm cultivators be equivalent to raising the difficulty of the test?"

Even though the cultivation of the two Cosmos Bridge combat masters had been sealed, their reflexes and comprehension of battle techniques were still not something that Consonant Spirit realm cultivators could match. That was a considerable hike in

the difficulty of the test.

"Don't worry, I will have them control their strength. As long as they keep their strength in check, the difficulty shouldn't be too different from before," assured Zhuo Qingfeng with a nod.

Through limiting the fighting prowess of the two new invigilators, it was possible to maintain the difficulty of the examination.

Wo Tianqiong was still slightly hesitant after hearing those words of reassurance, but eventually, he still nodded. "Un."

Considering the current state of the two Consonant Spirit realm cultivators, there was no way that the test would be able to continue any other way. Whether he liked it or not, he had to accept it.

Leaping to the stage, Xu Hong declared loudly as he scanned his surroundings, "I am Xu Hong, and I am now in charge of invigilating the Grade-1 tests. As long as you can withstand three moves from me, you will have cleared the selection."

"Allow me!"

A young man amid the crowd stepped forward and leaped onto the dueling platform.

Zhang Xuan recognized the young man.

It was the champion of Yunxu's internal selection, and the prowess he had shown in the display earlier was amazing as well.

He didn't disappoint in the duel as well. Against Xu Hong, even though he was being suppressed right the start, he still managed to withstand three moves and clear the selection.

Upon seeing someone succeed, others also went up the dueling platform enthusiastically.

However, they didn't fare as well as him. Five challengers from Yunxu, Luoqing, and Qingzhu lost consecutively, and the situation fell into a standstill once more.

"I'll go."

Seeing that no one was going up, a young man from Hongyuan stood up and stepped forward.

"That's Zhao Chuan, who is second last!"

"I remember that fellow from the power display. He is roughly equal to Zhu Xi in terms of strength!"

"Un. I would say that he doesn't stand a chance with cultivation like his, but... there is just something a little bizarre about the students from Hongyuan!"

"It isn't 'a little bizarre' but 'very bizarre'!"

Upon seeing that another candidate from Hongyuan had gone onto the dueling platform, a commotion broke out amid the crowd.

Hongyuan's performance in the power display earlier had been unimpressive, so no one had thought well of them at all. Yet, who would have thought that they would be the dark horse of the selection round? So far, they had two candidates who had gone up and both of them had incapacitated a combat master each. At this point, there was no one who dared make any guesses about the outcome of the battle anymore.

Hu!

Zhao Chuan leaped onto the dueling platform.

"Let's begin," Xu Hong said before charging forward with his fist.

On the other hand, seeing that Xu Hong wasn't using a weapon, Zhao Chuan also decided not to wield one either. Clenching his fist, he rushed forward to face Xu Hong's punch with a kick.

Peng!

As the punch and the kick collided, Zhao Chuan instantaneously felt immense might overwhelming him, knocking him down onto the floor. Under the impact, his face paled, and a stifling sensation assaulted his chest.

Without even withstanding a single move, he had been defeated.

Hu!

Seeing Zhao Chuan's defeat, the crowd heaved a sigh of relief.

It seemed like the situations before were indeed just exceptional circumstances. Not everyone in Hongyuan wielded such monstrous strength.

Beneath the stage, Zhu Jian yelled anxiously upon seeing such a sight, "Zhao Chuan, what the hell are you doing? Have you forgotten Principal Zhang's teachings?"

"Think about the combat techniques Principal Zhang has imparted to us and get it together!" Zhu Xi shouted as well.

How could Zhao Chuan even think of going head-to-head with his opponent? In the very first place, their greatest disadvantage against the combat masters lay in their inferior zhenqi and strength. Moreover, the other party was a Cosmos Bridge realm cultivator who had his cultivation suppressed; the other party's control over his strength was surely to be far superior to theirs. If they wished to achieve victory, the only way was to make full use of the combat techniques that Principal Zhang had imparted to them.

"The combat techniques that Principal Zhang has imparted us?" Zhao Chuan muttered feebly as he struggled to his feet. He contemplated over the content of Principal Zhang's lecture for a brief moment to allow the wisdom contained within it to wash over him before exhaling deeply and turning his gaze to Xu Hong once more. "There are still two more moves, right? Let's continue!"

Seeing how that fellow, who couldn't even withstand a punch from him, wanted to continue the battle, Xu Hong couldn't help but sneer derisively at the other party's foolishness. "You are courting death!"

With a swift step off from his current position, Xu Hong's figure disappeared from the spot, and several afterimages appeared on the dueling platform. Each of them had a concrete presence, which made it impossible for one to discern the real from the fake.

Principal Zhang says that when facing a maneuver utilizing feints, one must not allow oneself to be blinded by the false grandeur put up by the opponent. There is a thin but clear line between truth and falsehood. No matter how powerful a battle technique may be, as long as one can find the point where truth and falsehood overlap with one another and focus one's attack on it, one will surely be able to neutralize the

opponent's attack. Hearing the shouting beneath the dueling platform, Zhao Chuan suddenly recalled these words from Principal Zhang's lecture.

Even though Principal Zhang had only had an hour to lecture them, he had managed to cover a diverse range of common combat techniques. The opponent he was facing, Xu Hong, was able to produce numerous afterimages through capitalizing on his powerful movement technique, and with Zhao Chuan's current limits, the only way he would be able to overcome such a profound movement technique was to find the point where truth and falsehood overlapped and exploit it.

Focusing his gaze, Zhao Chuan stared at the other party's movements intently, and his eyes suddenly lit up.

I found it! Zhao Chuan exclaimed internally in delight. Clenching his fists tightly, he charged right toward an afterimage opposite him and struck it decisively.

Peng!

It was a sound reminiscent of a fist sinking into a sandbag. Xu Hong had been moving at a speed so quick that one could hardly see him, but in that moment, his figure suddenly converged into a rapidly retreating figure, which crashed forcefully into the ground before he could even release a howl of agony, blacking out.

Zhao Chuan's fist was directed at a point through which Xu Hong was unable to drive his zhenqi, thus inducing an energy backlash within the latter. Not even a Cosmos Bridge realm expert would be able to withstand that.

"I won?" Seeing Xu Hong fainting over, Zhao Chuan's lips began trembling in agitation.

Having faced the other party's punch head-on earlier, he had gotten a glimpse of the huge power difference between the two of them. Yet, just by following Principal Zhang's teachings, he had been successfully knocked out the other party with just a single move. Wasn't this a little too good to be true?

On the other hand, upon seeing this sight, Zhuo Qingfeng's body began trembling in disbelief.

It is one thing for your guys to knock out my Consonant Spirit realm combat masters, but to do the same to my Cosmos Bridge realm cultivators with their cultivation suppressed? Are you all actually experts disguised as Consonant Spirit realm master

teachers?

More importantly... you were beaten up helplessly like a dog on the first move, unable to put up a fight at all. Yet, on the second move, you were suddenly able to turn the tables and defeat my combat master so easily... Don't you think that you are changing too quickly?

All of a sudden, Zhuo Qingfeng couldn't help but remember the shouting beneath the dueling platform right after the first move. "Just a moment ago, they mentioned combat techniques that their principal imparted to them earlier. What is going on?"

At the same time, the same thought struck Wo Tianqiong and Shen Pingchao, and they couldn't help but widen their eyes in astonishment. "Could the hour-long lecture that Principal Zhang conducted for them... have something to do with this?"

They had been thinking that a last-ditch effort to enhance the students' fighting prowess right ahead of the selection would have been completely futile, but who would have thought that Principal Zhang's last-ditch effort would not only be useful but extremely effective as well?

If that wasn't the case, why would Zhao Chuan suddenly experience a burst in power that allowed him to knock out even the Cosmos Bridge realm Xu Hong after a reminder to follow the combat techniques imparted by their principal?

"An hour-long lecture?" Hearing Wo Tianqiong and Shen Pingchao's words, Zhuo Qingfeng frowned.

While it was indeed possible for formidable master teachers to impart the essence of combat to their students, what could one possibly teach within the span of an hour?

Perplexed, Zhuo Qingfeng hesitated for a moment before turning to the young man in front of him and instructing, "Ye Jun, you will head up to challenge the candidates from Hongyuan."

"Yes!" Responding with a nod, Ye Jun leaped onto the dueling platform.

This time, instead of issuing a challenge to all of the candidates of the Four Great Master Teacher Academies, he turned to the candidates of Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy and challenged just them.

"I will go!" One of the Grade-1 candidates from Hongyuan stood up.

"Try to remember Principal Zhang's teachings. As long as you adhere to what he taught us, you won't lose," Zhu Jian quickly advised.

"Un." After watching so many battles, that candidate had also realized that Principal Zhang's teaching was beyond ordinary. With a nod of his head, he walked up the dueling platform.

With this realization in heart, his fight was significantly easier.

Within two moves, he had already found Ye Jun's flaw and crushed him with a palm, leaving the latter convulsing uncontrollably on the ground.

"The knowledge that Principal Zhang imparted to us is really formidable."

Seeing that yet another one of their own had cleared the selection to become a combat master, even knocking out the invigilator while doing so, the other candidates of Hongyuan felt a huge boost of confidence.

If they had still harbored any doubts regarding their principal's teaching previously, after witnessing this, the apprehension they had felt vanished, leaving nothing but awe and admiration for their principal.

Zhu Jian, Zhu Xi, and Zhao Chuan... As fellow Grade-1 students from Hongyuan, they were well aware of the strength that those three wielded. Under normal circumstances, putting aside defeating the combat masters, they wouldn't even have been able to match the top fifteen candidates from the Yunxu Master Teacher Academy.

Yet, all three of them had managed to emerge victorious through utilizing the teachings their principal had imparted to them an hour earlier. It was inconceivable, but their principal had managed to make the impossible happen!

"The heck... are they on drugs?" Looking at the two additional combat masters lying on the ground, Zhuo Qingfeng felt as if the limit of his sanity was being challenged.

A single person defeating a stronger opponent could be rationalized as extraordinary combat talent and luck. Two people was pushing it, but it might just have been overwhelming coincidence. But four people consecutively?

It was apparent to all that all four candidates from Hongyuan were significantly weaker than their opponents, be it in terms of zhenqi, strength, agility, or reflexes. Yet, all of them had still been able to floor the combat master they were facing with ease as soon as they made a move. Were they hacking?

Or could it be just as they had said, the hour of lecture really had such mystical effects?

But if that was really the case, wasn't that lecture a little too fearsome?

Unable to hold himself back, Zhuo Qingfeng turned his sight over and spoke with a questioning tone. "Principal Zhang, your students..."

Wo Tianqiong, Shen Pingchao, and Wu Ran also turned their gazes over.

They were also bewildered by the situation before them, and they direly wanted to know what was going on.

"Oh. I lectured them on combat techniques for an hour just before the battle, so perhaps they might have been able to comprehend some of it." Understanding the intention behind their gazes, Zhang Xuan nodded. Following which, helplessness and frustration surfaced on his face. "It really pains my heart to see them see that these fellows weren't able to comprehend the true essence of the combat techniques I imparted to them, using them crudely and sloppily."

He felt that it was truly a pity that he only had only been able to lecture them for an hour.

If only he'd had another hour, he would have been able to reinforce their knowledge further. Perhaps then, their movements wouldn't have looked so cringeworthy to him.

"Comprehend some of it? Pains your heart?" Zhuo Qingfeng couldn't help but shudder upon hearing those words.

This is the freaking result of only comprehending some of it?

If they really comprehend all of it, won't our entire Combat Master Hall be destroyed by your students?

Furthermore, we have only tested four of your students so far and four of our invigilators have already been floored. How do you expect us to continue the test?

Screw that!

In any case, our combat masters will lose anyway!

And more importantly... pains your heart? Pain your ass!

Your students were able to subdue my combat masters without even sustaining the slightest injury, and you say that your heart is in pain?

The one who should be in pain is me, alright...

Chapter 937

Stone of True Breath

"Principal Zhang's lecture was actually that incredible?"

Not only were Zhuo Qingfeng, Wo Tianqiong, and the others frenzied, even School Head Mo, School Head Zhao, and the others were shocked silly.

Having trained the candidates personally over the past few days, they knew each of their abilities very well. When they heard that the candidates would have to withstand three moves from the combat masters, they had already prepared themselves for the complete defeat of the Grade-1 candidates. Yet, all four of the challengers they'd sent up had actually successfully gotten rid of a combat master each.

More importantly, the challengers were the weaker of the bunch. So... didn't that mean that every single one of their Grade-1 candidates would be able to clear the selection?

If that was the case, the candidates from the other Master Teacher Academies could probably retire for the Combat Master Selection this time around now.

Their Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy was going to take up all hundred slots for themselves!

Even though they had long known that Principal Zhang was extraordinary, they had really never thought that it would be to such an extent!

To allow their students to possess a fighting prowess comparable to combat masters within an hour... Not even the word 'overpowered' was worthy of being used to describe such a feat!

"When the examination ends, I will have them copy down the content of Principal Zhang's lecture word for word..." Xu Changqing and the other school heads clenched their jaws in agitation.

A lecture that could turn even their weaker candidates into nigh unparalleled experts in their power class, just how profound and incredible could the content be?

Just the thought of it could send excited goosebumps up their arms.

While the copied words wouldn't be infused with the Impartation of Heaven's Will, making the effects less pronounced as compared to being lectured by Principal Zhang, they had no doubt that it would become a great source of inspiration to help further their fighting ability.

...

After taking some time to soothe the stifled sensation that he felt, Zhuo Qingfeng took a deep breath, clenched his jaws, and instructed, "Bai Quan and Huang Tao, the both of you shall suppress your cultivation and continue the examination!"

Since his Cosmos Bridge realm combat masters wouldn't work, surely his Perfect Harmonization combat masters should be able to do the job!

"Yes!" the two combat masters replied in unison before stepping forward.

After suppressing his cultivation, the combat master on the right, Bai Quan, leaped onto the dueling platform. This time, before he could even say anything, a commotion broke out among the candidates at Hongyuan's side.

"I'll go!"

"You are stronger than me, and there will be plenty of chances for you later on. You should let me give it a try first instead!"

"Try your head, I will go first! You can try all you want after I am defeated!"

"Do you take me for a fool? By the time you are done, that fellow will already be knocked out on the ground..."

"Hey, you are older than me, right? Haven't you learned anything about giving in to your juniors before? Where in the world has your decorum as a master teacher gone? Look at me, I am far younger than you, and my cultivation is beneath yours, don't you think that you should give way to me?"

...

The crowd from Hongyuan argued with faces reddened in excitement.

The candidates from the other academies lay low, not wanting to face a Perfect Harmonization realm invigilator who had his cultivation suppressed in fear of the latter's strength. On the other hand, the candidates from Hongyuan looked like they had seen some kind of precious treasure, squabbling with one another vehemently as if afraid that the other party would steal it from their hands.

Do you need to be so exaggerated and savage?

On the dueling platform, Bai Quan's face twitched upon seeing this sight, and he was so furious and frustrated that tears were already on the verge of spilling down his eyes.

I am a combat master, a figure whom none in the Master Teacher Continent dare look down on!

Yet, in a duel against me, not only do none of you show any fear, you are even squabbling with one another to fight against me as if ladies in a wet market... This is intolerable!

Bai Quan clenched his jaws so tightly that creaking sounds could be heard from his teeth. Arrogant, aren't you all? I swear that I will beat deference deep into each of your bones!

Hu!

Just as he made such a vow in his heart, a young man leaped onto the dueling platform.

The young man had a rather slim frame, and he was one of the weaker candidates from Hongyuan.

Upon seeing the young man leaping up to the dueling platform, the crowd behind him revealed regretful looks.

If they had known earlier this would happen, they would have just dashed up to the dueling platform instead of squabbling with one another. They were being too courteous with one another, which allowed that fellow to get ahead of them.

"Damn it!"

Seeing the disappointed looks on the faces of Hongyuan's candidates, Bai Quan felt

something in his mind snap. Frenzied, he roared furiously, "Come, show me your strongest move!"

Huala!

As he shouted, he drove his zhenqi furiously, drawing every ounce of strength he could draw from his current Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle cultivation into his palm before thrusting it forward furiously. The resulting attack was extremely powerful, at least ten percent stronger than Chen Zhu when he was using his secret art.

Bai Quan's strength was far greater than the other combat masters that had come before him; his moves were majestic and complex, and his reflexes were swift as well. However, it was as if the opponent he was facing could peer right through his offense. After trading two moves, his opponent found a flaw in his offense and sent a kick right toward it.

After which... nothing.

Bai Quan collapsed under the kick, defeated!

Before he lost consciousness, a stream of tears flowed down his cheeks.

I really am a combat master. I really was sent here to test these guys.

Yet, to think that I would actually lose so tragically to one of them. Why does it feel as if I am the one being tested instead?

You are the one who is supposed to survive three moves from me, but the one to collapse within three moves ended up being me instead.

Seeing that even Bai Quan had been defeated, Zhuo Qingfeng was just about to dispatch Huang Tao when Lu Cheng suddenly sent a zhenqi telepathy to him. "Leader, if this continues, I fear that we will all be floored before we can even finish assessing the Grade-1 candidates! Furthermore, that is just the least of our worries. If the reputation of our Combat Master Hall takes a blow because of this..."

While others might be unaware of the uncanny things that happened around Principal Zhang, he was one of the few who had experienced it personally.

To be able to defeat the Half-Saint pinnacle him with a cultivation of Chrysalis realm

primary stage, how could the students taught by such an incredible figure possibly be ordinary?

Hearing Lu Cheng's words, Zhuo Qingfeng rubbed his temples.

The other party was right. Should they continue the selection as it was, it was indeed very likely for such a situation to occur.

If the combat masters responsible for testing the candidates were all knocked out, how could they proceed with the examination?

There was a strict deadline for the selection to be completed, and Zhuo Qingfeng couldn't begin to imagine how he was going to explain this matter to the Combat Master Hall if he failed to finish the selection in time!

For the ones testing to be knocked out by the ones who were being tested... How embarrassing was that?

"Why don't we first assess the candidates from the other three academies first and leave Hongyuan to the very last?" Lu Cheng suggested.

Zhuo Qingfeng hesitated for a moment before nodding. "Yes, that seems to be the only thing we can do now..."

If they were to continue assessing the candidates from Hongyuan, there was no doubt that more of their combat masters would be incapacitated. Since that was the case, they needed to first finish assessing the other three academies before deciding on a measure to deal with Hongyuan.

Having made up his mind, Zhuo Qingfeng immediately began making a series of arrangements.

Wo Tianqiong, Shen Pingchao, and Wu Ran were displeased to hear that the candidates of their academies would be assessed first, but eventually, they still agreed to the arrangement.

There was no way around it. Given the peculiar circumstances surrounding Hongyuan's candidates, they would never be able to complete the selection in time should they continue as it was.

...

It took eight hours to assess the all of the candidates, from Grade-1 to Grade-5, of the other Master Teacher Academies.

Owing to the strong foundations of the other three academies, their candidates were indeed powerful. However, the combat masters were simply far too strong. Only twelve candidates had cleared the selection from the strongest academy, Yunxu, resulting in the lowest record in its entire history.

The other academies fared even worse. Luoqing only had ten, and Qingzhu, eight.

The other three academies had marched into the Combat Master Selection confidently, but their results were far from satisfactory. They hadn't thought that such a situation would occur, especially given the increased number of slots.

"Only Hongyuan is left now..."

After assessing the candidates of the other three academies, Zhuo Qingfeng finally turned his gaze back to the candidates of Hongyuan.

Xu Tai, Chen Zhu, and the others had also recovered by this point, and they participated in the test as well.

It didn't take long before they blacked out once again under the insane fighting prowess of the Grade-1 candidates from Hongyuan.

It seemed like the previous experience had made them more proficient at blacking out. With just one move, the combat masters were already defeated.

"This..." Seeing as his subordinates fall one after another, Zhuo Qingfeng's face swiftly grew more and more livid as frustration and helplessness built up within him.

They weren't even done assessing the Grade-1 candidates from Hongyuan yet, and there were still another eighty from the other four grades waiting for their turn... At this rate, when could they finish their job?

It was not as if they had come here in seek of a beating.

For one of them to be knocked out in each duel, it sure was humiliating...

Hesitating for a brief moment, Zhuo Qingfeng stood forward and proposed, "Principal Zhang, at this rate, we won't be able to finish the selection in time. Thus, I have a suggestion. As long as your candidates clear a certain test, I will take them in regardless of the limit of a hundred slots. Otherwise, I will just have to ask your candidates to conduct an elimination tournament among themselves to sieve out the required numbers to fill up the remaining slots."

So far, a total of thirty candidates from the other three academies had cleared the examination, leaving behind seventy slots to fill.

If the candidates from Hongyuan were able to clear that test, Zhuo Qingfeng would be able to make an exception and accept all one hundred candidates from Hongyuan if needed. Otherwise, Hongyuan would only be issued the seventy remaining slots, and the candidates would have to fight it out among themselves to determine who among them would be selected.

Ultimately, the hundred slots could be considered as a guideline from the Combat Master Hall. If the hundred candidates from Hongyuan turned out to be true geniuses, it would be a blessing for the Combat Master Hall too if they could bring in all of them.

Zhang Xuan turned his gaze to Zhuo Qingfeng and said, "Please speak, Combat Master Zhuo!"

"Combat masters require not only combat skills but zhenqi and strength superior to normal cultivators as well. This is a necessary requirement for them to be able to complement the other combat masters in group battle and not become the baggage of the others," said Zhuo Qingfeng.

Wo Tianqiong, Shen Pingchao, and Wu Ran also nodded in agreement.

Combat masters could be considered as the military of the Master Teacher Pavilion, and the main purpose of their existence was to deal with the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe and any other existences that threatened mankind. Typically speaking, the battles they faced would be group battles instead of individual battles, thus requiring them to collaborate with one another. No matter how high one's comprehension of battle techniques was, if one's zhenqi and strength couldn't match up with one's companions, it was very likely that one would just end up dragging down the team eventually, especially in a prolonged battle.

"I have borrowed a Stone of True Breath from the Combat Master Hall specially for this selection exercise. As long as one places one's palm on it, it will clearly reflect the level of zhenqi and strength one possesses!" Zhuo Qingfeng said.

"The students of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy have indeed achieved a frightening level of comprehension in their combat skills, but their zhenqi and physical strength are still lacking. Under normal circumstances, one has to achieve a score of four on the Stone of True Breath in order to qualify as a combat master. However, considering the unique circumstances surrounding Hongyuan, your candidates only have to achieve a score of two in order to clear the test!"

There was a high threshold that one had to meet in terms of their zhenqi purity and physical strength in order to qualify as a combat master, but there was something peculiar about the candidates from Hongyuan that necessitated special consideration. Their zhenqi purity and physical strength were clearly far beneath that of their opponents, but they had still been able to knock out their opponents easily. For geniuses of such caliber, even the Combat Master Hall headquarters would make special exceptions for them.

There was indeed such a precedence as well.

"A score of two?" Zhang Xuan frowned in confusion.

This was his first time hearing of the Stone of True Breath, so he had nothing to gauge what a score of two or a score of four meant.

Hesitating for a moment, Zhang Xuan asked, "Can you allow me to take a look at your Stone of True Breath?"

"Sure!" Zhuo Qingfeng nodded before flicking his wrist, and a huge stone tablet around his height appeared before him.

The stone tablet was grayish in color, but it emanated a beautiful light-blue hue around it.

"It's indeed the Stone of True Breath... Incredible!" Wo Tianqiong's eyes lit up.

"Principal Wo has seen the Stone of True Breath before?" Shen Pingchao asked in intrigue.

"I have never seen it myself, but I have read of it in a book before. It is said that it harnesses the amazing ability to assess one's zhenqi purity and physical strength quantitatively. Just by placing one's hand on it and exerting one's zhenqi to the maximum, a number will surface. A number beyond two means that one possesses some talent, and a number beyond four means that the talent one harnesses far exceeds that of ordinary geniuses!" Principal Wo replied.

"If that's the case... Will the level of one's cultivation affect the result?" Shen Pingchao asked.

If one's cultivation affected the results of the Stone of True Breath, would it really be fair to assess one's talent using the same standards?

"It is fine! The Stone of True Breath only assesses the purity of one's zhenqi and physical body strength. The assessment criteria it uses are, to a great extent, separate of one's cultivation," Principal Wo replied.

While the two were speaking, Zhang Xuan walked up to the Stone of True Breath, and after examining it closely for a moment, he turned to Zhuo Qingfeng and asked excitedly, "Combat Master Zhuo, can I... give it a try?"

Chapter 938

The Invincible Zheng Yang (1)

He didn't have an understanding of the Stone of True Breath at all, and the only way for him to get a clear gauge of the exact significance of a score of two and four was to try it for himself.

"Principal Zhang, you want to give it a try yourself?"

Beneath the dueling platform, the faces of School Head Mo and the others immediately paled.

"NO!"

They knew about the destructive tendencies of their principal—anything that came into his hand would be destroyed in one way or another. Unless Combat Master Zhuo didn't want his Stone of True Breath, it was best not to let that God of Destruction come into contact with it, or else it would be too late for regrets after the fact.

Seemingly hearing the voices in the school heads' hearts, Zhuo Qingfeng smiled courteously and said, "There is no need to trouble Principal Zhang with this. Chen Zhu, come over!"

"Yes!" Chen Zhu nodded before swiftly heading toward the Stone of True Breath. He placed his palm on it, and a brilliant burst of light flashed in the area. Following which, a number surfaced on the stone tablet—5!

"This means that Chen Zhu's zhenqi purity and physical strength has exceeded the required standard of four," Zhuo Qingfeng explained.

"Allow me to give it a try too!" Luoqing's Zhang Qingshan, who had been defeated by Chen Zhu's saber previously, walked over and placed his palm on the stone tablet as well. With a radiant flash of light, a number surfaced... 4.5!

Even though it hadn't reached Chen Zhu's level, it did meet the prerequisite to becoming a combat master.

"Let me try it as well!" Zhu Jian stepped forward and placed his palm on the stone tablet. A glow of light followed, 2.1.

"I am only 2.1?" Zhu Jian's face twitched in horror.

He was ranked fifth among the twenty Grade-1 candidates from Hongyuan, but he had only managed to attain a result of 2.1. Didn't that mean that the other fifteen candidates behind him would struggle to even reach 2?

It seemed like it would have indeed been impossible for him to become a combat master were it not for Principal Zhang's impartation.

"With this, I believe Principal Zhang should have gained some understanding of the Stone of True Breath!" Zhuo Qingfeng said with a smile.

Through the results of the three people, it wasn't too difficult to roughly estimate the gauge for the Stone of True Breath.

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded with a frown.

Zhu Jian's strength could be considered to be at the forefront of most of the candidates, but he had only been able to achieve a score of 2.1 on the Stone of True Breath. If the other candidates were to take this test as well, it was highly likely that more than half would not be able to reach 2.

In other words, a minimum of forty candidates would be eliminated!

Zhang Xuan contemplated for a brief moment before eventually speaking up. "Combat Master Zhuo, is it possible for you to give me four hours? I wish to lecture my students for a moment first before allowing them to take the test!"

"Four hours?" Hearing Zhang Xuan's request, Zhuo Qingfeng was taken aback.

Even if it was really possible to raise one's combat techniques in a short period of time, surely zhenqi and strength would require accumulation over time!

A four-hour lecture... What could it possibly do?

Zhuo Qingfeng pondered for a moment before replying. "There is no need for that. It is already getting late, so why don't we conduct the test in the morning instead? This

way, you will get the entire night."

Just assessing the candidates of the other three academies had taken eight hours, so by this moment, the sun had already set, allowing darkness to envelope the sky.

In any case, he had been given three days to complete the Combat Master Selection, so there was no need for him to finish it on the first day.

"That will be truly helpful, Combat Master Zhuo. You have my gratitude!" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

Be it the physical strength or the zhenqi purity of Hongyuan's candidates, they were unimpressive. However, if Zhang Xuan had a night to lecture them, he was confident that he would be able to induce a metamorphosis in them.

"This isn't anything much. It will also be a blessing to the Combat Master Hall if we can bring talented fresh blood in," Zhuo Qingfeng replied with a smile.

"That's good to hear. Pardon me, but I will be taking my leave in advance. School Head Zhao and School Head Mo, I will be troubling you to make suitable arrangements for the three principals and their students and Combat Master Zhuo and his subordinates. I have to make full use of the limited time to conduct a supplementary lesson for these fellows!" Zhang Xuan instructed with a smile before leading the candidates toward the Elder Hall.

The Elder Hall had a formation to isolate auras and a formidable Spirit Gathering Formation. On top of that, it was also spacious enough to house a hundred people comfortably.

After Zhang Xuan left, School Head Mo and the others quickly took Principal Wo and the others to a night banquet to welcome them before eventually settling them into their accommodation.

...

After arriving at the Elder Hall, Zhang Xuan adjust the Spirit Gathering Formation set up in the room to maximize its effects before scattering five hundred high-tier spirit stones around the room.

Hu!

In the blink of an eye, the entire hall was already permeated with spiritual energy so concentrated that it caused the air to become viscous. Seeing that it had reached a satisfactory level, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

While raising one's physical strength and zhenqi purity might have been an arduous task for any other master teacher, that was not the case for Zhang Xuan.

After collecting countless physical body cultivation technique manuals from the Cultivation Compendium, he had already perfected the first four levels of the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body into Heaven's Path tier, allowing one to cultivate them without the need for catalysts.

As for zhenqi purity, even if it was impossible for the students to cultivate Heaven's Path zhenqi like him, he could still impart a very, very simplified version of the Heaven's Path Divine Art to them. It would be easy and fast for them to cultivate, and it would help to refine their zhenqi to make it purer and more condensed.

"You all only have a night's time. How much you manage to improve will depend on your capability and diligence!"

After settling everyone down, Zhang Xuan scanned the faces of the students for a brief moment before starting. "I will now impart a physical cultivation technique to all of you known as the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body..."

Zhang Xuan's voice was infused with the Impartation of Heaven's Will, inducing the students to drive the zhenqi in their bodies as per his words.

Wu Yangzi's Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body was extremely complicated, and even with the talents that these students wield, being the top twenty fighters in their respective grades, it would still require several dozen years of effort before they would be able to master it.

As such, Zhang Xuan had simplified it through the Library of Heaven's Path, making it significantly easier to comprehend and cultivate.

Immersed in their cultivation, the students' physical strength began growing at an incredible pace.

...

In the manor that King Huai had given Zhang Xuan, Zheng Yang stretched his back lazily as he walked out of his room.

After a day of cultivation, he had finally managed to digest everything that his teacher had taught him, thus inducing a significant rise in his fighting prowess.

Exhaling deeply, Zheng Yang suddenly recalled something and his eyes lit up. If I recall correctly, it seems like today is the day that the Combat Master Selection is held. It will be good to take a look!

He had heard many things about the legendary combat masters, and rumor had it that they were capable of easily matching opponents with cultivation far higher than them. As such, he was curious to see how powerful they were.

Zheng Yang took a look at Wang Ying, Liu Yang, and Wei Ruyan's room, and noting that they were still cultivating, he decided to head to the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy alone.

It didn't take him too long to arrive at his destination.

By this moment, the sun had already set, and the night banquet was already over as well. However, there were still many students from Hongyuan walking around the academy with excited looks on their faces.

Hongyuan had always been outdone by the other three academies in the Combat Master Selection. However, under the leadership of the new principal, they had finally managed to turn things around.

In this Combat Master Selection, their candidates managed to defeat even the combat masters themselves, and this made them feel extremely exhilarated.

From the discussions of the students around, Zheng Yang was able to gain a rough idea of what had happened in the day, and he chuckled softly in response.

Having followed his teacher from Tianxuan Kingdom, he knew that his teacher possessed astounding capability despite his young age.

Putting aside defeating the relatively weaker invigilators of the Combat Master Hall, he wouldn't be surprised in the least if his teacher were to train a group of experts that could overthrow the entire Combat Master Hall.

"Zhenqi purity and physical strength, these can only be accumulated through cultivating over a long period of time. Yet, that Principal Zhang actually thinks that he can raise the strength of his students through just a night of lecturing. He sure is delusional!"

"Indeed. In order to raise our zhenqi purity and strength, we had to go through so much suffering and pain! For one, we had to endure the insufferable heat from the Inferno Phoenix Saint Beast on the journey here, but even so, we were only able to raise our zhenqi purity and strength by just a bit!"

"Just because he achieved some success in his lecture on combat techniques, he thinks that he is the chosen one or something. Just wait and see how he makes a fool out of himself tomorrow!"

Walking along the street, Zheng Yang suddenly heard some irked voices.

Turning his gaze over, he saw a few young men dressed in peculiar master teacher robes walking along the road with disdainful sneers on their faces.

The students of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy had humiliated their Combat Master Hall through and through. There was no way they wouldn't feel indignant about that!

It was one thing to learn that Principal Zhang had raised the prowess of Hongyuan's candidate through nothing but a lecture at the very last moment, but for the other party to actually hope of raising the zhenqi purity and physical strength of the candidates in a single night... Wasn't that nothing but a daydream?

Those were the foundations of a cultivator, accumulated only through diligence over time. If they could be raised that easily, they wouldn't have to be put through suffering after suffering in the Combat Master Hall.

"These brothers over here, please hold it for a moment!"

Hearing that those men were mocking his teacher, Zheng Yang frowned in displeasure. He immediately walked over and stopped them with his hand.

"What is the matter?" The young men frowned.

"It's nothing much. I just heard that the members of the Combat Master Hall possess

superior strength, and I happen to be rather bored at the moment, so I wish to try your strength for myself to see if you are really as fearsome as the legends make you out to be!" Zheng Yang said calmly.

"You dare stop us despite knowing that we are from the Combat Master Hall? You must be tired of living!"

"To dare mock even us... Brat, you sure are arrogant, aren't you?"

These young men were already in a bad mood from the start, so upon seeing that even a youth around sixteen or seventeen dared to stop them to challenge them to a battle, they couldn't help but feel provoked and fly into a rage.

They were the powerful combat masters, existences who were respected regardless of where they went!

Yet, putting aside how their members had easily been floored by the candidates of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, now, even a young child dared to behave so arrogantly before them. How could they possibly accept that?

"Whether I am tired of living or not, you will know once you give it a try..." Zheng Yang smirked as he whipped out a spear and flicked it with astounding prowess.

"Since you are the one who provoked us in the first place, don't blame us for getting nasty..."

Seeing the other party whipping out his weapon, the faces of the combat masters turned livid as well. One of them stepped forward and flexed his arms.

This combat master was at Ethereal Treading realm pinnacle, and he was in charge of assessing the Grade-4 candidates. With the frightening strength that he wielded, he had managed to subdue countless geniuses one after another in the selection earlier, instilling fear deep into their minds.

The combat master could tell that the young man before him possessed a cultivation of Chrysalis realm primary stage, so he decided to step forth to face him.

As a combat master, he was capable of challenging opponents with cultivation far higher than him. Given that the other party was only a cultivation stage stronger than him, it should be a walk in a park for him to defeat the other party.

Whipping out a sword too, the combat master said nonchalantly, while emanating a clear aura of confidence, "Make your move! I don't have any interest in bullying those weaker than me, so I will give you a three-move advantage!"

"You want to give me a three-move advantage? There is no need for that! I will suppress my cultivation to that of your level!" Seeing that the other party was still oblivious to the plight he was in, Zheng Yang shook his head and suppressed his cultivation down to Ethereal Treading realm pinnacle.

On the other hand, seeing how the young man who had come out of nowhere was so arrogant as to suppress his cultivation to face him, the combat master sneered coldly. "Hah, since you are that intent on meeting your maker, so be it!"

Flinging his sword abruptly, an incredibly powerful shockwave swept through the entire area before him.

Even though his cultivation was only at Ethereal Treading realm pinnacle, the might of this attack could easily leave Chrysalis realm pinnacle experts trembling in fear.

"Humph!" Facing such an attack, Zheng Yang simply sneered coldly. Not bothering to evade at all, he raised his spear and steered it forward with ferocious might.

Peng!

As soon as the spear came into contact with the sword, the combat master was sent flying while coughing huge mouthfuls of blood.

Chapter 939

The Invincible Zheng Yang (2)

"What?"

"Zhi Chen was defeated?"

"Against a cultivator of the same cultivation realm, he was defeated in a single blow?"

"Furthermore, the other party didn't use any battle technique at all. It was just sheer physical and zhenqi might."

Upon seeing their own companion being defeated in a single blow, the combat masters, who had underestimated the young man before them a moment ago, couldn't help but clench their fists tightly with grim expressions on their faces.

Even though the other party had reached an incredible height in his cultivation despite his young age, they had thought that he might just have been the offspring of a wealthy clan who had raised his cultivation through consuming pills. Typically speaking, the fighting prowess of such individuals tended to be subpar.

As such, they hadn't thought of the other party as much of a threat. However, watching as their companion—who was unrivaled in his power class—being defeated with a single jab of a spear and now lying severely wounded on the ground, they couldn't help but freeze in shock.

Weren't they, combat masters, unrivaled existences regardless of where they went?

It was one thing for them to be outmatched by the candidates specially chosen by the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, but for even a random young man they met on the street to defeat them easily as well...

More importantly, unlike the candidates whom they had faced in the day, the other party hadn't utilized any exceptional battle technique or extraordinary combat sense to exploit their flaws. Instead, he had defeated their companion with just sheer zhenqi and physical strength!

In other words, they, who had gone through hellish training in order to enhance their strength, zhenqi, and reflexes, were being outmatched by the other party!

"Damn it!"

The severely wounded Zhi Chen pushed himself against the ground and got to his feet. He glared at the young man before him hostilely with gritted teeth.

It was one thing for him, as a combat master, to be humiliated during the selection exercise in the day, but to be humiliated by a young fellow who hadn't even reached his twenties yet in the evening as well... This was intolerable, unbearable, and insufferable!

Roaring furiously, Zhi Chen ignored the protests of his companions and dashed forward with his sword. Driving his zhenqi to its limit, he exerted a rampaging storm of sharp sword qi.

Hong long long!

In an instant, the air was cut into shreds.

Even though Zhi Chen was only at Ethereal Treading realm, he was capable of drawing forth a might that nearly no Chrysalis realm cultivator could withstand.

"Humph!" Seeing his enemy fly into a rage, Zheng Yang simply smiled wryly.

With this posture upright like a spear, Zheng Yang stood firmly, and with a cold harrumph, his spear shot forth once again.

The brilliant glint of the tip of the spear streaked forward furiously as if a charging flood dragon. In just the blink of an eye, it had already appeared right before the opponent, giving him no time to react at all.

"This... Impossible!"

Zhi Chen's body stiffened from fright upon seeing the spear materialize right before his eyes. By that point, it was already too late for him to dodge. A sharp pain pervaded his chest as he was struck by the tip of the spear. The next moment, he was sent flying through the air.

Pu!

Fresh blood spurted wildly from his mouth as his figure moved in a parabola through the sky.

The previous move had already left him severely wounded, and this strike had further aggravated his injuries, rendering him incapable of fighting.

"You aren't a match for me! Isn't there anyone stronger?" Ignoring the wounded Zhi Chen, Zheng Yang turned his gaze to the remaining combat masters.

Seeing how the young man had managed to subdue their companion with a single move, the others dared not underestimate him anymore. With grim looks, they traded glances, and eventually, a young man amid them stepped forward.

"I will be your opponent!"

This young man possessed a cultivation of Chrysalis realm pinnacle, and he had been in charge of assessing the Grade-5 candidates. The weapon he specialized in happened to be the spear as well. With his prowess with the spear, he had struck fear into hearts of the other three Master Teacher Academies' candidates so deep that none dared step onto the dueling platform to face him during the selection.

Stepping forward, the young man harrumphed coldly. "I will suppress my cultivation to battle you..."

"Suppress your cultivation? There is no need for that! Show me what you've got instead!" Zheng Yang waved his hand nonchalantly.

After which, he raised his spear and drove it forward with astounding might.

"Arrogant brat..."

The other party's abrupt move had left him no time to suppress his cultivation at all. The young man's face darkened as he raised his spear to counterattack.

Having devoted many years to the spear, the young man had long achieved the realm of Spear-Man Union. Jabbing his spear forward, innumerable afterimages of the spear swiftly appeared before him, forming a seemingly impenetrable wall that sealed the other party within it.

"Excellent spearmanship! It seems like Chi Xiao has decided to go all out!"

"Even our leader is full of praise for his spearmanship. That fellow is bound to lose..."

"Hah, a mere Chrysalis realm primary stage cultivator actually dared provoke us? He really should learn his place!"

...

Seeing the young man execute his spear art, the other combat masters simultaneously heaved a sigh of relief.

They knew full well how formidable their companion's prowess was with the spear; even a Half-Saint would have to back down before his might! On the other end, the fellow their companion was facing was only at Chrysalis realm primary stage. As powerful as that fellow was, they couldn't see him taking this attack unharmed.

The combat masters watched intently to see how the other party would be utterly defeated before their companion's spearmanship, but all of a sudden, the Chrysalis realm pinnacle Chi Xiao suddenly let out a stifled gasp before being sent flying into the distance. Just like the previous contender, Zhi Chen, he crashed to the ground and began spurting blood wildly.

"This... How is this possible?"

"Chi Xiao was defeated? And in one move at that?"

Narrowing their eyes, everyone's face warped in shock.

They could still rationalize Zhi Chen's defeat as the other party's advantage as a Chrysalis realm primary stage cultivator albeit suppressing his cultivation. But this time, the other party was weaker than Chi Xiao, but the other party had still managed to defeat him so easily.

How was that possible?

"Chi Xiao..."

The other combat masters hurriedly rushed over to help their companion up. In that moment, they couldn't help but notice the horror and disbelief in their companion's

eyes.

"Are you fine?" Worried, they asked anxiously.

Struggling to a sitting position, Chi Xiao urged through jaws clenched in pain, "Call... our leader here! I... am not a match for him."

Taking a glance at Zheng Yang, the other combat masters knew that it would be impossible for them to defeat him, given that even the strongest Chi Xiao wasn't a match for him. Thus, clenching their fists in frustration and anger, they turned around and left.

...

The residences that School Head Mo and the others had prepared for the parties from the other Master Teacher Academies and the Combat Master Hall were clean and spacious. Special attention had to been given to their accommodations so as to ensure that they would have a comfortable stay in Hongyuan.

Seated in the vast main hall at this very moment was Zhuo Qingfeng, and Wo Tianqiong, Shen Pingchao, and Wu Ran were sat at the opposite end to him.

After the banquet came to an end, there was nothing else for the three principals to do. As such, they decided to pay Zhuo Qingfeng a visit, hoping to trade their insights on cultivation, and it was fortunate that they did so. The conversation they had with the other party enlightened them greatly.

As expected of a Hundred Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall. His understanding of cultivation and mastery of battle techniques were far above even principals like them.

Just from the knowledge he shared in itself, they could already imagine the fearsome strength he wielded.

There was no doubt that he was capable of challenging opponents possessing a cultivation significantly greater than his, and it would be unwise to gauge him just by his cultivation realm alone.

"The crux of cultivation lies in one's heart. As long as one's heart remains earnest, one will only continue to grow strong." Zhuo Qingfeng chuckled. "The main difference

between us, combat masters, and you, master teachers, is that our hearts are solely devoted to furthering our fighting capability. On the other hand, you have to divide your attention between learning supporting occupations and imparting your knowledge to the others as well. So, it's only natural that we have an advantage in terms of fighting prowess."

"Indeed." Wo Tianqiong and the others nodded in agreement.

The main reason the fighting prowess of a combat master was greater than most master teachers was because they had devoted all of their effort to enhancing their fighting prowess. On the other hand, due to the primary responsibility that a master teacher shouldered, they had to divert some of their attention into studying supporting occupations and such so as to further their teaching capability.

Naturally, with their attention divided between several matters simultaneously, it was impossible for a normal master teacher to match up to the specialized combat master in terms of fighting prowess.

As the principals of the Four Great Master Teacher Academies, they possessed exceptional standing and had access to strong cultivation techniques as well. In terms of fighting prowess, they were superior to that of most master teachers. However, compared to Zhuo Qingfeng, they were still plenty lacking.

As the saying goes, 'each field has its own experts'. Not even master teachers could possibly be skilled at everything.

...

At this moment, Wo Tianqiong suddenly thought of something and asked, "Combat Master Zhuo, do you think that Principal Zhang's lecture tonight will be able to induce significant improvement among his student?"

Previously, Principal Zhang had said that he intended to conduct a lecture in order to raise his students' zhenqi purity and physical strength. In Wo Tianqiong's view, it was something nigh impossible to achieve. Nevertheless, the peculiarity that had happened with Hongyuan earlier in the day left a bizarre feeling within him, prompting him to ask Zhuo Qingfeng about this matter.

"Under normal circumstances, I would say that such a thing is completely impossible. Just that... there is just something a little uncanny about Principal Zhang," Zhuo

Qingfeng said with a frown.

Had it been anyone else, he would have been certain that the other party's attempt to raise his students' zhenqi purity and physical strength significantly over the course of a single night would have been nothing but daydreaming.

However, given that it was Principal Zhang they were talking about, he dared not just to a conclusion so hastily.

The other party was a person who could make his students' combat prowess surpass even that of combat masters within just an hour's lecture; it would have been a mistake to gauge the other party by normal standards.

"Un... I feel the same way as well," Wo Tianqiong said as he shook his head.

As compared to Zhuo shi, the feeling was even more vivid for him because he had personally seen the difference in the strength of Hongyuan's candidates before and after the lecture. It was as if that fellow was someone who common sense no longer applied to.

"Actually, there is no need to for us to think too much about this. We will know the answer tomorrow morning," Zhuo Qingfeng replied with a light smile. Halfway through his words, however, a young man suddenly rushed into the room.

It was the Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle combat master, Ye Jun.

As soon as he entered the room, Ye Jun began shouting. "Leader, bad news!"

"What's wrong?" Zhuo Qingfeng frowned.

"Our men were walking around the academy just now when we suddenly encountered a young man who seems to be either sixteen or seventeen. The other party stopped us and challenged us to a duel... However, who could have known that none of us would be a match for him, resulting in the complete defeat of the team!" Ye Jun swiftly went through the events that had just happened.

"A young man, only sixteen or seventeen, challenged you to a duel, and none of you are a match for him?" Zhuo Qingfeng had a look of incredulity on his face, as if he had heard a ludicrous joke.

Who were they?

Combat masters!

An existence that was invincible in their power class. Yet, they had actually suffered a complete defeat at the hands of a sixteen or seventeen-year-old young man?

Was this for real?

"That's right. The other party is only at Chrysalis realm primary stage... Chi Xiao faced the other party with his full strength, but even he was sent flying with a single jab and suffered severe wounds," Ye Jun said.

"A Chrysalis realm primary stage cultivator actually defeated the Chrysalis realm pinnacle Chi Xiao? How can this be possible?" Zhuo Qingfeng widened his eyes in shock.

If a combat master were to lose to an opponent of the same cultivation realm, it could only mean that the combat master was still insufficiently skilled. However, to lose to an opponent of a lower cultivation realm... This was something that would really be worth looking into!

"Leader, it is true!" Ye Jun replied affirmatively.

"Who is that cultivator? Is he a master teacher from Hongyuan?" Zhuo Qingfeng questioned.

"I am not too sure either. We were just walking along the streets when he suddenly stopped us, saying that he had heard of the strength that combat masters wield and wished to challenge us. He first suppressed his cultivation to fight with Zhi Chen, but Zhi Chen was defeated in an instant. After which, Chi Xiao stepped forward to accept his challenge, but he wasn't a match either!" Ye Jun explained.

"To be able to move freely around the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, the other party must be from Hongyuan. Let's go over and take a look..."

Hearing about how two of his subordinates had been defeated so easily, Zhuo Qingfeng's face darkened as he got to his feet.

Wo Tianqiong, Shen Pingchao, and Wu Ran also traded glances among themselves

before getting to their feet and following behind him.

Before they had even made their way to the entrance of the courtyard, they heard several yells of agony. Rushing toward the voices, they soon saw the majestic combat masters who had easily subdued the candidates from the three Master Teacher Academies earlier in the day lying on the ground, spurting blood as if a fountain. A sixteen or seventeen-year-old young man was standing proudly in front of them with a spear in his hand, reminiscent of an indomitable God of War.

"Even though I suppressed my cultivation, none of you were able to take an attack from me. Is this the strength of the legendary combat masters?"

Glancing at Zhuo Qingfeng, a wry smile emerged on the young man's face. "Seems like your reputation precedes you!"

Chapter 940

The Invincible Zheng Yang (3)

"What did you say?" Hearing those words, the combat masters behind Zhuo Qingfeng flew into a rage.

Even Wo Tianqiong, Shen Pingchao, and Wu Ran were stunned by the sight before them.

For the powerful combat masters to be easily defeated by an individual and even mocked that their reputation preceded them. Everything was happening right before their eyes; however, they couldn't help but wonder if they were in a dream.

With a hand on his spear and the other behind his back, Zheng Yang remarked impassively, "I've always wanted to know how powerful combat masters are. It seems like this is all there is after all!"

Honestly speaking, after all he had heard about the combat masters, he was indeed a little disappointed with what he was seeing.

"What arrogant words!"

Seeing a fellow who had come out of nowhere criticizing them arrogantly, Wu Xu bellowed furiously and stepped forward. "Do you dare fight me in a battle?"

Wu Xu had already reached Half-Saint. Even though he was only at primary stage, his cultivation felt irrepressible like a relentless river. An ordinary Half-Saint pinnacle would be no match for him at all.

"Is there any reason I wouldn't fight you in a battle?" Gazing at the other party provocatively, Zheng Yang raised his spear skillfully.

"Good. I will suppress my cultivation and fight you then!" Wu Xu said as he flicked his wrist and took out a sword.

Over the past three months, not only had he achieved a breakthrough in his

cultivation, his comprehension of swordsmanship had also deepened significantly. The current him was significantly stronger than back when he met Zhang Xuan at the valley.

"There's no need for that. A Half-Saint primary stage cultivator, it will just take me a single spear!" Chuckling softly, Zheng Yang leaped forward powerfully, bringing him before Wu XU in a single step. The spear in his hands burst forth with might reminiscent of a powerful dragon.

"You are courting death!" Seeing that the other party actually dared launch such a simple attack that was devoid of complexity and technique against him and intended to go head-to-head against him, Wu Xu's face turned livid.

No matter what, he was a Half-Saint combat master, an invincible existence among his peers. It would be difficult for a cultivator whose cultivation was lower than him to defeat him even when exploiting despicable tricks, and yet, the other party actually intended to face him head-on? That was no different from courting death!

Harrumphing coldly, Wu Xu's sword flew forth to strike the other party's spear, his movements also devoid of complexity and technique.

At the same time, he also pumped his zhenqi through his body at an incredible speed reminiscent of river water gushing out of a hole in a dam, augmenting the strength of his stab.

Since the other party intended to face him head on, he would use his superior strength as a combat master to make the other party understand how laughable his action was.

Peng!

The sword came into contact with the spear.

Wu Xu was thinking that the other party would surely be unable to withstand his overwhelming zhenqi and fall in defeat instantaneously, but in the moment that both weapons collided, he felt a might superior to even his own rushing at him like an overwhelming torrent.

It was as if the other party's offense was a tsunami, devouring the river of zhenqi in his body in an instant.

Deng deng deng deng!

Overpowered, Wu Xu was forced to retreat eight steps consecutively. Cold sweat trickled down his forehead, and his eyes revealed his disbelief toward the situation he was facing.

That fellow's strength is actually stronger than that of Wu Xu, who is a cultivation realm higher than him? How in the world did that fellow cultivate?

Seeing such a sight, Zhuo Qingfeng and the others who were spectating the duel by the side were shocked.

Combat masters were representative of the strongest fighting force in terms of physical strength and zhenqi in their respective cultivation realm... Yet, a sixteen or seventeen-year-old young man had actually managed to knock back Wu Xu when his cultivation was beneath the latter; this was too frightening!

"Continue!" After knocking Wu Xu back, Zheng Yang roared grandly as he charged forward once more.

At the same time, his spear shot forth and sealed everywhere Wu Xu could possibly evade to precisely.

*What swift and profound spearmanship that is... * Zhuo Qingfeng narrowed his eyes in astonishment.

Possessing great strength granted one an advantage, but if one was unable to utilize it skillfully, one would still be unable to pose a threat to one's enemy. This was similar to the duels between the candidates from Hongyuan and the combat masters earlier in the day; none of the candidates from Hongyuan possessed strength greater than their opponent, but they had still been able to subdue the combat masters they were facing with ease.

Even if one's strength was inferior to one's opponent, one could still make up for it with skill, searching for the opponent's weaknesses and exploiting them to achieve victory.

As such, while Zhuo Qingfeng was astounded by the brute strength displayed by the young man before him, he had still thought that Wu Xu would still stand a good chance. However, he had never expected for the young man to possess exceptional combat

sense and precise control over his movements as well.

That spear that burst forth was clearly a maneuver exploiting the flaws in Wu Xu's moves. It was aiming to seal the space around Wu Xu completely so that the latter would be swept into a momentum that would prevent him from executing any powerful battle techniques.

Incredible strength and a profound comprehension of combat... Just where did this fellow come from?

Wasn't he way too terrifying?

Peng peng peng peng!

While Zhuo Qingfeng was still deep in thought, Wu Xu was already pushed into a corner. After retreating several steps, he finally reached his limits. His sword flew from his hand, flying several rounds in the air before stabbing into the ground a dozen meter away.

On the other hand, he faltered to the ground with the opponent's spear pressed against his neck. It was a chilling sensation, which penetrated down to his bone, and he felt as if a hole would be made through his neck at any moment.

"I have lost..." Wu Xu's body stiffened.

He had never thought that after achieving a breakthrough to Half-Saint, he would still be defeated by a Chrysalis realm primary stage young man so easily.

"You are formidable. Why don't I become your next opponent?" Seeing that his friend had been defeated so utterly, Lu Cheng couldn't help but step forward and challenge the young man.

"Lu Cheng, you aren't a match for him." Zhuo Qingfeng placed a hand before Lu Cheng and shook his head

With his eye of discernment, he was able to sense vividly how fearsome the young man before him was.

Zhenqi, strength, speed, battle technique, combat sense... It was as if the young man before him was infallible; there was no apparent flaw that one could exploit against

him!

Lu Cheng had achieved a breakthrough to Half-Saint rather early on, and he was also the strongest combat master in the group he led. However, it was still clear as the day to him that Lu Cheng was no match for the other party.

"Leader..." Lu Cheng turned to look at Zhuo Qingfeng anxiously.

The other party had infringed on the dignity of the combat masters right to their face. If they didn't teach him a lesson, how could they possibly walk outside with their heads held high in the future?

"I will fight him."

Shaking his head, Zhuo Qingfeng stepped forward and looked at Zheng Yang.

"I won't take advantage of you. I will suppress my cultivation down to your level."

Hu la!

Right after saying those words, Zhuo Qingfeng's aura weakened from the initial Saint 2-dan to Chrysalis realm primary stage.

Even though he had suppressed his cultivation, his battle techniques, combat sense, and reflexes still remained the same. Even with a cultivation of Chrysalis realm primary stage, his fighting prowess was still more fearsome than the Half-Saint Lu Cheng.

"Let's begin." Zheng Yang nodded as he raised his spear. In an instant, his presence suddenly felt like a towering spear, as if he was a spear himself.

The highest realm of Spear-Man Union—Spear-Man Convergence!

On the other hand, with a grim expression on his face, Zhuo Qingfeng whipped out a sword and pointed it over as well.

Hu!

Knowing the fearsome strength that the young man before him wielded, Zhuo Qingfeng didn't hesitate to make the first move and dashed forward.

His footsteps were incredible profound, and they carried a peculiar rhythm to them. Even when it seemed like he was right before Zheng Yang, if Zheng Yang were to attempt to attack him, he would realize that Zhuo Qingfeng was beyond his reach.

"It is a formation... Combat Master Zhuo has fused his movement technique with a formation! The movements he is making are aligned with the steps required to form a certain formation!" Wo Tianqiong's eyes narrowed in alarm.

Even though it was not necessary for combat masters to study supporting occupations, some would still choose to learn a handful of combat-oriented ones so as to augment their fighting prowess.

This was exactly what Zhuo Qingfeng was doing.

Through harmonizing his footsteps with a formation, he was able to confuse his opponent with his movements, rendering them unable to determine the perfect time and position to strike.

"This is indeed a fearsome move; even I wouldn't be able to come up with a countermeasure for it. Let's see how that young man deals with this," Shen Pingchao remarked.

The movements that Combat Master Zhuo utilized was extremely unorthodox. It was difficult for him to see through it even with his current cultivation, so it seemed even less likely that the young man would be able to do so. If that young man failed to deal with this maneuver well, it wouldn't be long before he fell in defeat.

"Humph!" Noticing the peculiarity of Zhuo Qingfeng's move as well, Zheng Yang harrumphed coldly. Instead of dodging, he abruptly pushed his spear toward the ground.

Huala!

With the sharp glint of a spear charging forth, a huge crack of around ten meters in length emerged on the ground.

Following which, the spear was levered up, and countless fragmented rocks and a cloud of dust rose into the sky.

Upon seeing this sight, Wo Tianqiong's eyes lit up in awe. "He is... making use of the

fragmented rocks to determine the other party's position? Smart move!"

He had been wondering how the young man would attempt to cope with such a profound movement technique, and he was honestly impressed by the young man's wits for having come up with such a simple solution to the matter.

Zhuo Qingfeng had set up a formation with his leg movements so as to make his current location indeterminable to his opponent, and in a sense, it was even more fearsome than having to deal with afterimages. Yet, the young man had wisely chosen to strike the ground instead of attacking Zhuo Qingfeng directly, creating a cloud of dust in the surroundings.

Regardless of how complicated Zhuo Qingfeng's movement art was or which formation he had set up, one thing was for sure—the dust would only fall on tangible objects. In other words, whatever the dust didn't cloak was all fake!

With this simple maneuver, he had successfully managed to overcome Zhuo Qingfeng's movement art.

Huala!

It took a brief instant for the young man to find Combat Master Zhuo's position amid the cloud of dust, and his spear pierced through the air to strike the other party.

"Humph!" Seeing that the young man had managed to overcome his movement art so quickly, Zhuo Qingfeng's complexion darkened. He swiftly raised his sword to counterattack.

Ding ding ding!

The sword came into contact with the tip of the spear.

In that instant, Zhuo Qingfeng felt a dull pain in his chest, and he was forced several steps back. Astonishment couldn't help but fill his mind.

To his horror, his zhenqi strength was far beneath that of the other party when they were both at the same cultivation realm.

On top of that, he also realized that their zhenqi purities were at completely different levels as well.

For a sixteen or seventeen-year-old young man to be so powerful... just who was his teacher?

Hua hua hua!

Zhuo Qingfeng had to swing his sword several times consecutively before he was able to neutralize the force from the other party's attack. Following which, he swiftly dashed forward to counterattack. However, to his shock, the other party's spear charged forth at a speed even faster than his sword, callously directed at his weakness.

Left with no choice, he could only swiftly pull back his attack to fend off the other party's spear before attempting another one from another angle. However, the same thing only happened again and again.

After trading eight blows in such a manner, Zhuo Qingfeng's face paled, and his breathing became irregular.

The other party's might was simply too great, and with each attack directed precisely at his weakness, he found himself gradually being overwhelmed.

If not for his superior reflexes and nimble movements enabled by his Saint 2-dan cultivation, he had no doubt that he would have already been severely injured by now.

"Stop! There is no need to continue the fight any longer. I am not a match for you." Leaping backward, Zhuo Qingfeng stepped out of the battle and sighed deeply.

He hated to admit it, but the truth was the truth. Under the condition of equal cultivation realms, he was no match for the young man before him.

The other party's comprehension of battle techniques, combat sense, and even sheer strength were far beyond his.

If an expert of the other party's caliber were to enter the Combat Master Hall, he had no doubt that that they would be able to obtain the seat of a Thousand Men Commander, or perhaps even a Vice Captain!

Who would have thought that Hongyuan were concealing such an incredible genius among themselves?

Unable to hold himself back any longer, Zhuo Qingfeng asked, "Are you student of

Hongyuan as well? May I know who your teacher is, and whether you have any interest in joining our Combat Master Hall?"

"I am not a student of Hongyuan..."

Keeping his spear, Zheng Yang placed his hands behind his back and said nonchalantly, "...but my teacher is Zhang Xuan!"

Chapter 941

The Lecture Ends

"Zhang Xuan? You are student of Principal Zhang?" Overwhelmed by agitation, Wo Tianqiong's voice sounded a little shrill.

Wu Ran and Shen Pingchao had also stiffened in shock by the turn of events.

Wasn't Principal Zhang only a Half-Saint cultivator himself? Yet, his student was already at Chrysalis realm and... was even capable of rivaling opponents stronger than himself, such that even a Hundred Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall wasn't a match for him?

It was laughable how they had thought that Principal Zhang was only skilled at imparting combat techniques but was unskilled in nurturing a student's zhenqi and physical strength. It was only at this moment that they realized how ridiculous the notion was.

How could a man capable of nurturing such a talented student possibly be simple?

"It's no wonder he was able to solve the problem left behind by Kong shi. It seems like Principal Zhang is not only capable in his supporting occupations but combat as well," Wu Ran remarked.

Based on what he had seen previously, he also wouldn't be a match for Zheng Yang had the both of them been at the same cultivation realm.

Since even the student was so formidable, wouldn't the teacher be even more powerful?

Zhuo Qingfeng also had the same thoughts in mind, and he couldn't help but ask, "If that's the case, does that mean that Principal Zhang is even stronger than you?"

"Compared to my teacher, I am like the light of a firefly against the blazing sun, a raindrop before the vast ocean... Truly not worth a mention at all!"

Speaking of his teacher, Zheng Yang's expression immediately turned respectful. "My only dream in my life is to attain a ten thousandth of the greatness of my teacher, and I will be satisfied."

"T-this..." Zhuo Qingfeng's body stiffened.

If even a person of the young man's caliber hadn't even reached a ten thousandth of Principal Zhang's capability... just how powerful was Principal Zhang?

"Are you willing to join our Combat Master Hall to become a combat master?" Zhuo Qingfeng asked.

Hearing those words, Zheng Yang shook his head. "I am not a master teacher, how can I become a combat master?"

Combat masters were the talented fighters sieved out from the master teachers. Given that he wasn't even a master teacher, how could he be qualified to join the Combat Master Hall?

"It is true that the Combat Master Hall belongs to the Master Teacher Pavilion, but the examination for it differs from that of a master teacher. It doesn't matter whether one is a master teacher or not; the only prerequisite required to join is for one to possess sufficient strength!" Zhuo Qingfeng explained hurriedly.

"Considering the nigh invincible strength you wield within your cultivation realm, such that even I am not an opponent for you, it shouldn't be too difficult for you to clear the examination."

"You mean to say that... I can become a combat master?" Zheng Yang was stunned.

"Of course!" Zhuo Qingfeng nodded. "Considering your talent, you will surely receive the best resources if you join the Combat Master Hall. With your abilities, becoming a Thousand Men Commander, Vice-Captain, or even a Captain isn't beyond reach!"

There was a hierarchy within the Combat Master Hall as well, ranging from an ordinary member to a Captain.

Zhuo Qingfeng himself was a Hundred Men Commander.

"Furthermore, the resources available at the Combat Master Hall are even greater than

what Qingyuan Conferred Empire can provide. If you join its ranks, you won't have to worry about procuring resources anymore," Zhuo Qingfeng persuaded anxiously.

Since even he was no match for the young man before him, it meant that the other party had already achieved strength equal to a Hundred Men Commander, and this was still given that the other party hadn't gone through the systematic training of the Combat Master Hall. If the other party were to become a combat master, he had no doubt that it would just be a matter of time before the other party became the Combat Master Hall's ace.

He couldn't let a genius like that go.

Noting the respect the young man had for his teacher, Zhuo Qingfeng continued his persuasion. "Besides. Principal Zhang is a master teacher. The only way for you to follow his footsteps is to become a combat master. Otherwise, it will reflect badly on Principal Zhang if his direct disciple is only an ordinary cultivator..."

"This..." Zheng Yang fell silent.

Indeed.

His teacher was moving too fast. His teacher wasn't just a master teacher but the principal of an entire Master Teacher Academy now, and he would only climb higher as time passed. If he were to remain stationary, it would only be a matter of time before the distance between them grew so big that his teacher was beyond reach.

Furthermore, Zhao Ya, Yuan Tao, and Lu Chong had already gone out to seek their own opportunities, and they would only be stronger than ever when they returned.

As a disciple of Zhang laoshi as well, he couldn't and wouldn't allow himself to lag behind.

Without hesitating for too long, Zheng Yang nodded. "Alright, I am willing to join the Combat Master Hall. Where can I take the examination?"

"I am not qualified to assess a person of your prowess, and given that you aren't a master teacher, the procedures will be slightly more troublesome as well. Why don't I send a message to the Combat Master Hall to have them send a Vice Captain over to assess you personally? It won't take too long, around three days at most," Zhuo Qingfeng said.

While fighting prowess was the only prerequisite to joining the Combat Master Hall, the Combat Master Hall was still a branch of the Master Teacher Pavilion, so it would be more troublesome for an individual who wasn't a master teacher to join it. Given Zhuo Qingfeng's current standing, he was still unqualified to make the call.

Thus, he could only report it upward so that they could send someone qualified over.

"Alright, I will be waiting for the assessment in three days. However, I might not be the only one participating in the assessment!" Zheng Yang said.

"You might not be the only one?" Zhuo Qingfeng frowned doubtfully, not comprehending Zheng Yang's words.

"I still have a senior and two juniors who are on par or even stronger than me. I hope that they can take the combat master assessment as well." Zheng Yang nodded.

He had come here alone, but if Wang Ying, Liu Yang, and Wei Ruyan were to learn that they had the opportunity to become combat masters as well, they would surely be interested in taking the assessment. In any case, it would be best for him to alert the other party of this matter.

"Even stronger than you?" Zhuo Qingfeng's lips twitched in shock.

He had thought that the reason the young man before him was so powerful was attributed mainly to his overwhelming aptitude for combat, and it was already very fortunate for a master teacher to accept a genius as talented as that in his entire lifetime.

Yet, judging from the young man's words, it seemed like Principal Zhang not only accepted him but many others as well...

This was too ferocious!

"Alright, I will agree to it!"

It would benefit any organization to gather as many talents of such caliber as possible, so how could Zhuo Qingfeng possibly turn him down? Thus, he hurriedly nodded in agreement.

"Un." Hearing that he had the other party's permission, Zheng Yang heaved a sigh of

relief before bidding farewell and heading out.

His purpose for coming to the academy had just been to see the prowess of the combat masters, and now that he had seen it, honestly speaking... he was really disappointed.

Knowing that the young man was Principal Zhang's student and couldn't possibly disappear out of the blue, Zhuo Qingfeng wasn't anxious at all. After the other party left, he clasped his fist toward Wo Tianqiong and said, "Principals, pardon me, but I won't be able to accompany you anymore. Farewell!"

"Farewell!" Knowing that Zhuo Qingfeng was showing them the door, the three principals clasped their fists in response and left.

After they left, Zhuo Qingfeng took out his Communication Jade Token without any hesitation and reported everything that had happened back to the Combat Master Hall.

...

Hu!

Oblivious to the fact that his student had caused a ruckus at the accommodation of the combat masters and defeated everyone there, at that moment, Zhang Xuan had finally finished lecturing the method of condensing one's zhenqi and the simplified version of the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body.

Looking at the crowd busily cultivating before him, he heaved a sigh of relief.

His lecture paired with his Impartation of Heaven's Will had benefited the students greatly, and the several hundred high-tier spirit stones he had tossed into the Spirit Gathering Formation had also allowed them to make huge progress in their cultivation.

It was just a single night, but the average fighting prowess of the candidates was raised by more than twofold.

If only I had three days, I could reinforce their cultivation further, and they would be much stronger than this... Zhang Xuan sighed in lamentation.

While the content he lectured seemed to be simple on the surface, it was aligned with

the essence of the world, so it was not that easy to grasp. It was only because of the exceptional talent of these hundred students that they were able to learn so quickly and make such massive improvements within a limited period of time.

If they had been just an average student of the academy, they wouldn't have been able to make such considerable advancements in their cultivation even if Zhang Xuan had lectured them for three days straight.

While talent didn't necessarily determine one's end point, the talented were still bound to learn faster than the untalented given the same lecture.

Considering that these students were able to emerge as the top twenty of their respective grades in the Master Teacher Academy, which was overflowing with geniuses, it went without saying that each of them possessed amazing talent.

But even so, a night of teaching had only given them a glimpse into what Zhang Xuan had tried to teach them.

After the lecture came to an end, the students gradually awakened from their trance. Even though they weren't too sure how strong they had become after the lecture, they could still vividly feel the devastating strength coursing through their bodies.

And the one who had given them such power was the young man before their eyes!

"Teacher!"

The hundred students kneeled to the ground as they gazed at Zhang Xuan in admiration and respect.

Regardless of whether the other party was willing to acknowledge them as his students or not, they would never forget the grace he had shown them.

"Good. From today onward, you shall be my students."

After all Zhang Xuan had imparted to them, even if the students still couldn't be considered his direct disciple, they could surely be considered his own students. As such, he didn't turn them down.

"Yes, Teacher!" the crowd replied.

Fearing that the students would be unable to exert their full strength due to their nervousness, Zhang Xuan offered some words of reassurance. "Alright. The day is up, and the Combat Master Hall's assessment should be beginning very soon. Later on, as long as you exert your full strength, you should be able to clear the assessment with ease."

In response, the students nodded in agreement.

Leaving the room, they immediately noticed that the world outside had already brightened up. The warm sunlight that shone on their bodies felt very comfortable.

It was already nearing the middle of the year, and summer was nearing its end. The morning sun wasn't particularly warm, but it was devoid of the slight frigidity typical of autumn.

Arriving at the training grounds, they found that it was completely packed with huge crowds just like the day before.

A night was more than sufficient for the entirety of Hongyuan City to learn about the affairs that had occurred the previous day. As such, even Emperor Yu Shenqing had come personally this time around to witness history being made in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy.

Before Hongyuan's party reached their allocated area within the training grounds, a young man suddenly walked up to Zhu Jian and asked with a smile, "How do you feel after a night of training?"

It was the champion of Luoqing's internal selection, Zhang Qingshan!

He was one of the few who had cleared the selection yesterday and become a member of the Combat Master Hall.

His question raised a ripple among the crowd as curious gazes swiftly turned over, desiring to hear Zhu Jian's response.

If an hour lecture from Principal Zhang could grant them astounding strength capable of subduing even the combat masters, how powerful would they become after a night of cultivation?

Zhu Jian shook his head. "I am not too sure either."

He was not being humble by saying these words. This was indeed how he felt at the moment.

He had felt his zhenqi becoming purer and more condensed after a night of training, and his physical body had strengthened significantly as well, but he would be entirely sure to what extent his improvement was until he tested it himself.

"I see... Why don't I trade a simple punch with you using just our physical and zhenqi strength? We won't use any battle techniques. This way, we should be able to roughly gauge the extent of your improvement!" Zhang Qingshan said.

From the assessment of the Stone of True Breath the previous day, it was shown that he had a score of 4.5 whereas Zhu Jian only had a score of 2.1, a significant difference between them. In other words, in a clash of brute strength, he would be able to overwhelm Zhu Jian easily. Through trading fists, they should be able to estimate where Zhu Jian roughly stood after a night of cultivation.

"Alright!" Thinking that the idea was great as well, Zhu Jian nodded in agreement. Chuckling softly, he clenched his fist tightly and flung it toward Zhang Qingshan.

"Hehe, be careful. My strength is no joke!" Seeing how candid Zhu Jian was, Zhang Qingshan chuckled in response and retaliated with a punch of his own.

Peng!

As the two fists collided, the smile on Zhang Qingshan's face immediately stiffened as a jolt ran through his body.

"Argh!"

A piercing scream of agony escaped from his mouth as he flew rapidly into the distance, disappearing from everyone's eyes. This strike had probably sent him several hundred meters away.

"Hey, don't be in such a rush to fly away... I haven't used my full strength yet." Zhu Jian scratched his head in embarrassment.

"..." The dumbfounded crowd.

Chapter 942

All Cleared

It took quite a bit of time before Zhang Qingshan returned in an unkempt state. His face was bruised, and his hand was swollen. He looked nothing like the awe-inspiring number one expert of the Grade-1 students from yesterday!

He had seen Zhu Jian's prowess the day before, and while the latter's combat techniques were incredible, his zhenqi and physical strength were severely lacking. Under normal circumstances, even if he were to only use half of his strength, he would still have been able to crush the other party easily.

Yet, despite using his full strength, he had still been sent flying with a punch. To make matters worse, it seemed like the other party hadn't even used his full strength yet.

The more he thought about the matter, the more stifled he felt. He subconsciously turned his eyes to Principal Zhang, who was even younger than him, and admiration unknowingly seeped into his gaze.

There was no doubt that the huge transformation Zhu Jian had undergone was a result of the overnight lecture. To induce such huge growth within an individual in just a single night... Just what in the world was being lectured?

Zhang Qingshan wasn't the only one who harbored such thoughts. The others also swiftly realized the same thing, and they couldn't help but stare at the students of Hongyuan in envy.

They had taken pride in the fact that they had been able to enroll within Yunxu, Luoqing, and Qingzhu, which were far more powerful than the bottom placed Hongyuan. However, after all that had happened, they couldn't help but feel like they had made the wrong call back then.

Under the leadership and guidance of such a formidable principal, the students of Hongyuan would surely reach incredible heights in the future.

Taking into sight the expressions of the crowd, Wo Tianqiong couldn't help but remark

with a bitter smile, "It's fortunate that the Four Great Master Teacher Academies are located a significant distance away from one another. Otherwise, all of our students would probably be taken away by Hongyuan."

"Indeed. In the past, I thought that the strength of an academy was determined not by an individual but the relentless diligence of the entire academy, be it the students, teachers, or the elders. However, after seeing Principal Zhang, I've realized that that is complete baloney. With just his capability as an individual, he is easily prop up an entire Master Teacher Academy." Shen Pingchao sighed helplessly.

"Back then, when mankind was suffering under the tyranny of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, Kong shi single-handedly reversed the plight of mankind and ushered in an era of prosperity. We were still in the mindset that quantity is the key, and the more teachers there are, the better it will be for our academies. Yet, the other party was able to achieve everything alone. This is probably the difference between a real genius and run-of-the-mill geniuses like us!" Wu Ran nodded.

Regardless of whether Principal Zhang's lecturing ability was really that frightening or not, it was a fact that Zhu Jian and the others had undergone a transformational change after listening to his lecture. This in itself was more than sufficient to boost the other party's reputation, granting him prestige far beyond them

Should Zhang Xuan give the word, it was very likely that their students might withdraw from their academies and join Hongyuan.

To think that their three Master Teacher Academies would end up in such an awkward position despite everything they had done, they couldn't help but feel stifled within.

"The men from the Combat Master Hall has arrived..."

As the three principals were lamenting over their positions, hushed whisperings suddenly spread throughout the crowd. Turning their gazes over, they saw Zhuo Qingfeng and the others walking toward the dueling platform.

After a day of rest and recuperation, the combat masters had mostly recovered from the injuries they had sustained from Zheng Yang last night. Nevertheless, there were still visible bruises on their faces, which was unlike how they had been when they first appeared the day before.

Their disposition seemed very different as well. Originally, they had arrived with their

heads held high, not willing to spare a single glance for the others around them. An air of superiority had lingered around them, as if there was no one who could top them in the world.

But today, their heads were hung in shame, embarrassed to meet anyone's eyes at all.

But this was to be expected. Reputed to be the pinnacle of fighting prowess in the Master Teacher Continent, those who could join the Combat Master Hall were the strongest among the master teachers.

It was inevitable that they would think of themselves as superior to the students of the Four Great Master Teacher Academies, and they had thought that serving as the invigilators of this selection would be a walk in the park. They would just have to show off their prowess to instill deference for the Combat Master Hall in the hearts of the students and charm a couple of female juniors while they were at it.

Yet, instead of instilling deference, they were the ones who had been crushed instead. Just the sheer amount of blood they had spilled easily added to several jin, and placed side by side, it would surely be sufficient to circle around the academy.

(One jin = 0.5kg)

The Combat Master Selection had always been a platform for the combat masters to show off, but when it came to them, it became a platform for them to be pummeled instead, and it was the kind of pummeling where they weren't able to find an opportunity to retaliate at all. How could they not feel embarrassed?

There was even a point in time when they had wondered if they might have gotten things wrong, and if they were in fact the students from the Four Great Master Teacher Academies whereas the other students were the real combat masters.

"There is no need to be depressed. True strength is something that is accumulated through diligence over a long period of time! The students from Hongyuan do possess formidable combat techniques, but without sufficient strength to back up their techniques, they will still find themselves overpowered easily by experts wielding vastly superior strength. As the saying goes, true strength tears through all techniques. That is not to say that technique is unimportant, but at the very least, the suffering you have undergone isn't in vain."

Noticing the downcast atmosphere shrouding the combat masters, Zhuo Qingfeng

offered a few words of consolation. "The fact that you were unable to achieve victory only means that you haven't been working hard enough in your cultivation and haven't accumulated sufficient strength. We shall double your training when we return so that such a matter will never happen again!"

"Yes!" Hearing Zhuo Qingfeng's consolation, the combat masters finally brightened up from their gloom.

Indeed, true strength was capable of tearing through all techniques. As long as one could accrue sufficient strength, all techniques would be worth squat!

Seeing that his consolation had managed to raise the morale of the combat masters, Zhuo Qingfeng heaved a sigh of relief. Following which, he turned his gaze to Zhang Xuan and said, "Principal Zhang, let's begin the assessment."

After which, he leaped onto the dueling platform and took out the Stone of True Breath with a flick of his wrist.

"Alright." Zhang Xuan nodded before asking once more in confirmation, "As long as my students can achieve a score of two or above on the Stone of True Breath, they will have cleared the selection, right?"

"That's right." Zhuo Qingfeng nodded affirmatively.

The conventional prerequisite for one to qualify as a combat master was to achieve a score of four, but in special consideration of the overwhelming combat prowess that Hongyuan's candidates had displayed, they would only require a score of two in order to clear the selection.

"Good. Alright, you should all head up!" Heaving a sigh of relief, Zhang Xuan gestured for the candidates to head onto the dueling platform.

The candidates nodded before forming a queue to walk toward the Stone of True Breath.

The first in the line was Zhu Jian. He had been assessed by the Stone of True Breath the previous day, so the others had allowed him to head to the front of the queue so as to assess the changes he had undergone first.

Upon reaching the Stone of True Breath, Zhu Jian placed his palm on it and began

exerting his physical and zhenqi strength.

Hu!

There was a blinding flash of light before several numbers came into appearance—6.5!

"T-this... how is this possible?"

"Wasn't his score only 2.1 yesterday?"

"A nightlong lecture actually induced a threefold increase in his physical and zhenqi strength? Is that really a supplementary lesson they have gone through and not the blessing of the deities?"

The numbers that surfaced on the Stone of True Breath had left everyone dumbstruck.

A leap from the 2.1 yesterday to 6.5 today... The crowd couldn't help but think that their eyes were playing tricks on them.

The ones who had suffered the greatest of blow were, naturally, the combat masters. Their bodies swayed weakly as they turned their gazes to Zhuo Qingfeng with tears glistening in their eyes.

Didn't you just tell us that true strength is something that is accumulated through diligence over a long period of time?

Didn't you just tell us that the suffering we went through wasn't in vain?

An hour's lecture granted Hongyuan's candidates a comprehension of combat and battle techniques far surpassing what we have learned over many years of hard work, and a night of supplementary lesson has enhanced their zhenqi and physical strength exceeding what we have achieved from years of arduous and hellish training.

Haven't been working hard enough... Before Principal Zhang, does hard work even mean a thing at all?

To think our years of effort can't even compare to a lecture from Principal Zhang...

"It could be just that Zhu Jian is an exception. It is impossible for everyone to have

become as formidable as him." Noticing the looks from the combat masters, Zhuo Qingfeng hurriedly reassured them before turning his gaze back to the Stone of True Breath.

Right after Zhu Jian was done with his assessment, another candidate stepped forward and placed his palm on the Stone of True Breath, and a brilliant flash of light shone.

6.1!

Following which...

6.3!

6.2!

5.9!

6.7!

...

Under this relentless wave of shocking results, it didn't take too long for the crowd to be completely numbed.

At this point, it couldn't have been clearer to them that Zhu Jian wasn't just an exception. The average prowess of Hongyuan's candidates had indeed been raised.

The combat masters had already been no match for Hongyuan's candidates on the grounds of combat techniques before, and at this very moment, the other party had even raised their physical and zhenqi strength to be beyond theirs. In other words, they were completely outmatched in all aspects!

The combat masters who had just barely plastered the shattered pieces of their confidence back together suffered yet another heavy blow.

Noticing the air of desolation shrouding the guests from the Combat Master Hall, School Head Mo stepped forward and consoled, "Don't worry about it, such blows are daily occurrences around our principal. It will be fine once you get used to it."

"Indeed. Once you get used to it, you will start to think that anything our principal

does is natural." Zhao Bingxu nodded in agreement.

"..." Zhuo Qingfeng.

"..." The combat masters.

"..." The three principals.

Get used to it...

Just how heavy a psychological pressure were the elders and teachers of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy put under for them to say such words!

...

After a moment of heavy breathing to regain his calm, Zhuo Qingfeng finally soothed the frustrations in his heart and announced loudly, "I hereby announce that the hundred candidates from the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy have cleared the assessment, and from this day forth, they are official members of the Combat Master Hall!"

"That's wonderful!"

"All of our candidates have cleared the selection!"

"For all one hundred to clear it simultaneously, we have definitely made history today."

Upon hearing the announcement, a huge commotion broke out beneath the dueling platform as the faces of innumerable students of Hongyuan reddened in agitation.

Their academy had always been in last place in every Combat Master Selection. Over the course of ten thousand years, only 327 candidates had successfully cleared the selection. Inevitably, this record had become the shame of the entire academy, be it the principal, elders, teachers, or students... But this time around, a hundred candidates of theirs had cleared the selection simultaneously, and that was three times the number of the other three academies combined!

They never could have imagined this to be possible in the past.

"Principal Zhang, we wish to become combat masters as well. Can you conduct a

lecture for us too?"

"Indeed! I swear that I will surely work harder than the candidates to raise my fighting prowess so that I can go and play around in the Combat Master Hall."

"Principal Zhang, please conduct a lecture for us."

"Hahaha, the Combat Master Selection, is it? As long as Principal Zhang lectures us personally, it won't be too long before our entire academy is filled with combat masters!"

...

Right after Zhuo Qingfeng made the announcement, loud cheers burst forth from the crowd. Countless students gazed at Zhang Xuan in agitation.

Many of the top twenty candidates were friends or acquaintances of them, so they had a clear grasp of their strength. After witnessing the strength of the combat masters, they knew that it would be impossible for most of them to clear the selection under normal circumstances. Yet, with just two lectures from their principal, all of their candidates had managed to clear the selection.

They might not be as talented as the top twenty, but if their principal were to lecture them more frequently, wouldn't they have the opportunity to become combat masters as well?

Such a notion swiftly rippled through the minds of the student populace, and it grew from a spark to an unstoppable inferno.

The Combat Master Hall was just a branch of the Master Teacher Pavilion, but due to the overwhelming strength its members possessed, it was highly respected among all cultivators, and many sought to join its ranks.

Even if they were uninterested in becoming combat masters, there was no cultivator who would be willing to give up on such an ideal opportunity to raise their fighting prowess.

"This..."

Not expecting the student populace to react in such a manner, Zhang Xuan was

stunned for a moment before shaking his head.

"I do have the ability to raise your fighting prowess significantly, but not everyone will enjoy an improvement as great as the hundred candidates. However, if you are truly interested in listening to my teachings, I am more than willing to conduct a public lecture for everyone. However, whether or not you will be able to join the ranks of the Combat Master Hall will be dependent on Combat Master Zhuo's call. If he is unwilling, there is nothing that can be done about it."

Chapter 943

The Stifled Combat Masters

Zhang Xuan was well aware that his lectures had the ability to raise a person's strength swiftly.

However, this was also dependent on the aptitude that each cultivator possessed. There were some who possessed mediocre talent in combat, and any effect that Zhang Xuan's lecture would have on them would be minimal at best.

Furthermore, in order to raise the zhenqi and physical strength of the hundred candidates swiftly, he had put in five hundred high-tier spirit stones to fuel their cultivation. On the other hand, there were a hundred thousand students in the entire Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy. There was no way he could fork out 500,000 high-tier spirit stones, and he couldn't afford to set up a Spirit Gathering Formation large enough for all of them as well.

Thus, it was clearly an infeasible notion to have the entire academy become combat masters.

Besides, the Combat Master Hall also had limited slots. Whether one could join their ranks or not didn't hinge on him but the call of a certain middle-aged man seated not too far away.

At this point, Zhang Xuan turned to Zhuo Qingfeng to seek his opinion on the matter, only to see the latter's face twitching uncontrollably with exasperation reflected in his eyes.

Honestly, at this point, Zhuo Qingfeng felt as if he was on the verge of losing his mind.

If Principal Zhang really did so, it probably wouldn't take long before the entire Combat Master Hall became a branch of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy.

"Cough cough." Suppressing his frenzy, Zhuo Qingfeng replied with forced composure, "Principal Zhang, it would indeed be great for our Combat Master Hall to take in as many talents as possible. However, the responsibilities of a master teacher are far

greater and nobler. It will be a great loss to mankind should most of the students of Hongyuan become combat masters."

Naturally, the Combat Master Hall sought to take in as many talents as possible to bolster their forces. However, too many people and the resources would be spread thin, and that wasn't a good thing.

This was just like how every nation needed an army to safeguard the interests of their people, and naturally, a larger army would be preferred over a smaller one. However, if the nation were to recruit too many soldiers, that would put a strain on their finances, which could have been devoted to other purposes, causing the nation to lose out in the other aspects.

Thus, balance was necessary.

This was also the reason there were limited slots to the Combat Master Selection each time round.

If all master teachers were to become combat masters, who else would impart knowledge to the cultivators to encourage growth among the populace?

If all were to devote their time to learning the art of combat, wouldn't the whole world fall into chaos?

"Indeed." Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

If he were to lose all of his students to the Combat Master Hall right after taking over the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy... that was indeed not really good.

After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan spoke up. "Alright, I will hold a lecture among the official members of the Xuanxuan Faction later on, but no one is allowed to take the combat master assessment after that!"

With his current capability, it would be difficult for him to induce significant growth among the entire student populace through a public lecture. However, if it was just the Xuanxuan Faction, that would still be possible.

Furthermore, these men had been following him for a long time, and they were extremely loyal to him. They could be considered the foundation of his influence.

Naturally, he would preferentially offer this opportunity to the members of the Xuanxuan Faction. This would serve as a reward to them, as well as an impetus to encourage loyalty among the students toward Hongyuan and him so as to further unite the academy.

"Alright!" Hearing that the principal would be conducting a lecture for them, the members of the Xuanxuan Faction nodded their heads in excitement.

Even if they were forbidden from taking the combat master assessment, it would still be great if their fighting prowess could rise considerably.

Zhuo Qingfeng raised his hands and declared, "Alright, I hereby announce that the Combat Master Selection has come to an end!

"In three days, there will be several non-master teacher candidates taking the combat master assessment here. Anyone who is interested is more than welcome to spectate!"

"Non-master teacher candidates will be taking the combat master assessment?"

"Who?"

"I have no idea as well..."

The crowd was bewildered by the abrupt announcement.

Zhang Xuan was also intrigued as well. He couldn't help but turn to Zhuo Qingfeng and ask, "May I know which geniuses will be taking the combat master assessment despite not being master teachers themselves?"

"Cough cough!" Hearing Principal Zhang's question, Zhuo Qingfeng choked. "They are... your direct disciples, Principal Zhang!"

"My direct disciples? You mean Wang Ying and the others? How do you know them?" Zhang Xuan was baffled.

He had been in the middle of lecturing the candidates when Zheng Yang challenged the combat masters the previous night, so he was still unaware of the matter.

"That... Last night, a direct disciple of yours named Zheng Yang came to challenge us, and none of us were a match for him in a battle of equal cultivation. Even I fell in defeat

against him," Zhuo Qingfeng explained awkwardly.

"That fellow... Preposterous!" Zhang Xuan shook his head.

It was no wonder the members of the Combat Master Hall seemed a little deflated and subdued earlier on. Having suffered such a heavy blow, it couldn't be helped that they were unable to accept it all of a sudden.

Zheng Yang had indeed gone overboard this time around.

Sighing deeply, Zhang Xuan attempted to console them. "There is no need for you to feel so dispirited over this matter. Zheng Yang is my direct disciple, and I have already taught him for around a year. I have been teaching him ever since he was at Juxi realm 1, and he has gone through a lot since then. It is only normal that you weren't able to defeat him!"

It was still fine when Zhang Xuan hadn't spoken, but after hearing his words, the combat masters suddenly felt like keeling over.

Are you saying that he has grown from Juxi realm to become a Chrysalis realm expert within just a single year, jumping over a dozen realms? And more importantly, despite his rapid growth, he is still able to harness power capable of matching cultivators beyond his cultivation realm?

Why do we feel even more stifled after hearing your consolation?

Furthermore, what do you mean by 'it is only normal that you weren't be able to defeat him'?

We are combat masters, the occupation boasting fighting prowess far beyond ordinary master teachers!

Knowing that he and his subordinates' morale would only continue to decline if they were to continue hearing the fellow's words, Zhuo Qingfeng hurriedly stood up and bade his farewell. "Alright, that will be all for today. I have to bring my subordinates away for their training now!"

There was a kind of talent in the world that allowed one to pierce a person's heart deep with unintentional words. This was probably it.

The other party's gaze and tone couldn't have been any more earnest, but why did it feel like their faces had been viciously slapped by his words?

We are also geniuses, you know...

As Zhuo Qingfeng left, the other combat masters hurriedly followed behind him, and it didn't take long for them to disappear into the distance.

The other three principals also felt extremely stifled within, and they felt that they would only be embarrassed further were they to remain there. Thus, they quickly found an excuse and left hurriedly. Were it not to spectate the assessment that would occur three days later, they probably would have marched up to the Cloudcliff Flying Ship and left that very instant.

Seeing that the others had left, Zhang Xuan shook his head before getting up and heading toward the headquarters of the Xuanxuan Faction.

By the time he arrived at the headquarters, the entire area was already fully packed.

Zhang Xuan swiftly headed to the front and began his lecture. The content that he spoke of was identical to what he had imparted the other candidates, but this time, he didn't use the Impartation of Heaven's Will, so the effects were significantly poorer. As such, most students weren't able to achieve breakthroughs on the spot.

Nevertheless, the students still benefited greatly from his teachings. Their comprehension of battle techniques and combat techniques grew significantly, and the new physical body cultivation technique and method to condense zhenqi they were imparted with had left them incredibly excited as well.

The lecture lasted ten whole hours, until the sky had darkened once more. After resting for a brief moment, Zhang Xuan left the headquarters of the Xuanxuan Faction to seek School Head Mo.

"Help me prepare. I intend to visit the Mausoleum of Principals," Zhang Xuan said.

He could tell that Zhuo Qingfeng and the three principals were avoiding him like the plague, so there was no need for him to remain around to host them.

In any case, it was a good time for him to pay the Mausoleum of Principals a visit so that he could procure the Lightning Resonance Rock required for his breakthrough

from Half-Saint to Nascent Saint.

His cultivation had already reached Half-Saint pinnacle, so it was about time for him to seek out the object to attempt a breakthrough.

"I knew that you will want to pay the Mausoleum of Principals a visit very soon, so I applied for the artifact to help sever your soul from the headquarters as soon as I received news that you have cleared the 6-star master teacher examination, and it arrived a few days ago," School Head Mo replied with a smile.

A while ago, when he had spoken to School Head Mo about wanting to enter the Mausoleum of Principals, the other party had told him that he would have to sever his soul and leave it on the Mausoleum Tablet. However, doing so forcefully would inflict significant harm on his soul and possibly reveal his identity as a soul oracle, so he had to borrow an artifact from the headquarters in order to do so, but the requirement to doing so was that he had to be a 6-star master teacher at minimum.

At this moment, he had cleared the 6-star master teacher examination and successfully procured the artifact as well, so it was about time for him to head over to take a look.

"Great!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

The duo headed toward the Mausoleum of Principals, and just as they arrived at the entrance, they met up with Zhao Bingxu, who passed the soul-severing artifact from the headquarters over to Zhang Xuan.

"This is the Copper Bell. As long as you hold this artifact in your hand, it will automatically nourish your soul and sever a small portion of it safely," Zhao Bingxu explained.

Examining the artifact in his hand, Zhang Xuan noted that it was a spherical bell around the size of his fist. Holding it in his palm, he immediately felt a warm surge of energy flowing into his soul, nourishing it.

"This is indeed a good artifact." Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

While it wasn't too difficult for a soul oracle to sever their soul, it was a daunting task for an ordinary cultivator and potentially extremely damaging as well. Zhang Xuan had been wondering before how the preceding principals had managed to leave their will

behind without fail, and now, it seemed like this artifact was the real reason for that.

After the soul was nourished, it would be severed and stored in the Copper Bell before being deposited into the Mausoleum Tablet. The Copper Bell served to minimize the effects of the Five Declines on the severed souls deposited in it, allowing it to exist for over ten thousand years without dissipating.

"Principal Zhang, you should be able to open the entrance and enter the mausoleum with your Principal's Seal. We aren't qualified to accompany you in, so we will be seeing you off here," School Head Zhao said with a smile.

"Un." Nodding, Zhang Xuan took a look at the Mausoleum of Principals.

It was located near the Elder Hall, built against a mountain. There was a massive Concealment Formation built around the Mausoleum of Principals, such that even the entire mountain had disappeared from view. Had the two school heads not brought him over personally, he never would have been able to find it.

It seemed like the place of rest for the generations of principals were viewed to be more important than even the Cultivation Compendium to the Master Teacher Academy.

Flicking his wrist, Zhang Xuan took out his Principal's Seal and flashed it in front of him. In an instant, a small passageway appeared in the formation, and Zhang Xuan made his way to it.

Hu!

The next moment, the world around him suddenly warped, and he found himself standing amid a lush mountain forest.

The mountain wasn't too high that it was probably more accurate to call it a hill. The scenery within the formation was completely different to what he had seen on the outside. There was a road paved with bluestone tiles, and walking along it, Zhang Xuan soon found his passageway blocked by a massive stone tablet.

It was roughly eighty meters in height and twenty meters in length. It was hard to tell what kind of material it was made from, but it carried a lofty and ancient air around it, as if one had walked into history.

Is this the Mausoleum Tablet? Zhang Xuan wondered.

Previously, School Head Mo had told him that to enter the Mausoleum of Principals, he would have to infuse a sliver of his soul into Mausoleum Tablet. Considering the sheer size and unique air shrouding the stone tablet, this was probably it.

Circling around the stone tablet, Zhang Xuan could feel powerful soul energy being harnessed within the stone tablet, as if many souls were infused into it, giving it a formidable presence reminiscent of a heavy mountain weighing down on one.

There is no doubt about it, this must be the Mausoleum Tablet... Zhang Xuan nodded. I should find Founder Mu Kai's tombstone first and obtain the Lightning Resonance Stone before infusing my soul into the Mausoleum Tablet!

Zhang Xuan had just obtained the Copper Bell, and it hadn't been long since his soul had started being nourished by it, so he was still incapable of severing his soul.

Even though he had been told that he had to leave a sliver of will on the Mausoleum Tablet, he realized that he could proceed forward without doing so. Most likely, it would suffice as long as he were to do so before leaving. Thus, he circled around the Mausoleum Tablet and proceeded in.

The Mausoleum of Principals was tranquil but solemn, leaving one feeling slightly pressured walking through it.

Not too long later, Zhang Xuan finally caught sight of the first tombstone. Inscribed on it were the following words—Tombstone of the 103rd Principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy.

103rd principal? Doesn't that mean that this is the grave of the old principal? But didn't he go missing before he could enter the Mausoleum of Principals? Why is his grave here?

Zhang Xuan was stunned.

Chapter 944

News on the Innate Fetal Poison

Zhang Xuan was the 104th principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, so naturally, the 103rd was the previous principal, as well as the first master of the Byzantium Helios Beast.

In other words, the old principal who he had heard so much about!

According to what he knew, the old principal had never been to the Mausoleum of Principals before he went missing, so how could his tombstone be here?

Perplexed, Zhang Xuan headed forward to take a closer look.

His tomb was constructed out of ordinary bluestone, typical of the normal tombs erected for cultivators, showing no hint of the prestigious standing that a principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy should have.

Taking a look around it, Zhang Xuan soon found something amiss about it. He placed his hands lightly on a certain portion of the tomb and a mechanism whirred into action. Following which, an old voice sounded.

It was a mechanical recording, similar to what Wu Yangzi had left in the underground chamber.

"I am the 103rd principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, Zhang Yinqiu. I knew that it would be difficult for me to return alive back to the Master Teacher Academy from my expedition, so I selfishly entered the Mausoleum of Principals without telling anyone and built my own tomb, storing my personal clothes within so that at least I would have a resting place after my death."

(The Zhang is of a different character as Zhang Xuan.)

The voice contained in the mechanical recording sounded nonchalant, but Zhang Xuan could hear a deep helplessness in it.

It was easy to charge to one's death in a moment of hot-bloodedness but difficult to march to a despairing situation nonchalantly.

How wretched was it for a man to prepare for his own death in advance despite knowing that the path he was headed on to lead to certain doom?

During his time in the Master Teacher Academy, Zhang Xuan had learned a lot about the old principal from the mouths of others. All along, Zhang Xuan had thought that the old principal had fallen into a desolate situation due to his failure to accurately assess the risk of the ancient domain, but from the looks of it now, it seemed like he'd been mistaken.

To enter the Mausoleum of Principals in advance and erect a tomb for himself, the old principal must have known that there was a good chance he would lose his life in the expedition and prepared for his passing.

The voice continued. "Being unable to leave behind my will to guard the academy is truly the greatest regret of my life! It is not that I am unwilling to do so, but the mission I have to undertake is far more important than that. I can't allow my soul to suffer the slightest defect for that will compromise the success of my mission."

The artifact to sever souls allowed a cultivator to sever his soul safely, but that would require a very long duration of nourishment.

Otherwise, one would suffer considerable damage to one's soul.

Only someone like Zhang Xuan, who cultivated the Heaven's Path Soul Art and possessed a soul far larger than the ordinary, could do so easily. Otherwise, not even a 7-star master teacher could do so.

Sighing deeply, the voice carried on. "The fact that you are here means that you have become the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy. Perhaps, we might even be old acquaintances. I hope that you can treat Byzantium Helios Beast kindly. Tell him that I have died honorably for the welfare of mankind, and I have no regrets in doing so, so do not grieve for me. Also, be wary of the saint beasts of the Cloudmist Ridge."

From the old principal's point of view, there were only that few candidates in the Master Teacher Academy who were eligible to take over his position after his passing, and this message served to pass on his will to his successor.

The old principal probably couldn't have imagined that his successor would have already resolved the two worries that he harbored in advance.

Despite knowing that it was impossible for the mechanical voice to respond, Zhang Xuan still asked in a whisper, "What were you intending to do?"

It was clear that the old principal knew that his undertaking would cost him his life, going to the extent of even erecting a tomb for himself in advance. To march on despite knowing that the path ahead led to the edge of a cliff... Just what was he intending to achieve?

Was there something more to the expedition to the ancient domain?

"What you probably know about me is that I have gone on a normal expedition to explore an ancient domain, but the truth isn't just so. I have found that the ancient domain harnesses secrets regarding Kong shi when he was younger, and it seems like even the poison masters were involved in the matter as well. The information I have at hand is too limited, and the only way I can uncover more is to head there myself. Furthermore, anything concerning the World's Teacher is not to be spoken of lightly, and there were certain compelling reasons as well, so I could only keep the news to myself."

Zhang Xuan was taken aback as his body stiffened in astonishment. *Secrets regarding Kong shi when he was younger? Poison masters were related in the matter as well? Could it be... the Innate Fetal Poison?*

Based on what he knew, Kong shi had also suffered from the Innate Fetal Poison when he was younger, just like him, and only by successfully becoming a 9-star master teacher before thirty would one stand a chance of avoiding certain death.

This was also the reason Kong shi had cultivated desperately when he was younger, not daring to stop in the least.

A matter that concerned the secrets regarding Kong shi's youth and the poison masters. After hearing such information in the old principal's message, how could Zhang Xuan possibly remain calm?

"If you truly wish to learn more about this matter, pay a visit to the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall. A word of warning, the location of the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall is well-guarded, especially against master teachers. Even after devoting years to looking

for it, I was still unable to accurately pinpoint its location. However, based on my deductions, it seems to be in the vicinity of Jingyuan City. You should find a detailed map of the ancient domain that I seek to explore there. It is truly a pity that time is not on my side, not allowing me to prepare thoroughly before heading there."

Detailed map? Zhang Xuan was bewildered for a moment before coming to a realization.

It was apparent that the ancient domain that the old principal hoped to explore was an extremely dangerous place.

If he had been able to obtain the detailed map of the location, his chances of survival would have been significantly higher. However, it seemed like something major had cropped up in the midst of his preparation, prompting him to swiftly organize an expedition to the ancient domain despite the risks.

It seemed like the old principal wished that his successor would be able to make ample preparations before deciding on whether to undertake the mission or not, so that his successor wouldn't have to follow in his footsteps.

"Alright, I can only tell this much to you. As for what to do, that will be up to you." The voice gradually faded into the tranquility of the forest, as if it had never appeared in the first place.

"Thank you." Even though the voice had only been a mechanical recording, Zhang Xuan still bowed deeply to the tombstone of the old principal.

It was not out of gratitude toward the other party for giving him a hint regarding the Innate Fetal Poison, but out of respect for the other party's willingness to charge forward bravely for mankind despite knowing that it would lead to his demise.

Knowing that the mission he was going to undertake was important, he even passed on the opportunity to leave behind his will in the academy so as to not compromise his mission!

Such an attitude was reminiscent of the master teachers who had charged forth valiantly to fend off the spirit beasts of the Cloudmist Ridge back then. For their justice and faith, they had willingly put down even their own lives.

Perhaps it was due to the sacrifice of these noble men that master teachers had been

able to become the most prestigious and respected occupation in the Master Teacher Continent.

In face of the survival of the entire mankind, how could one back down in fear of harm?

Shaking his head with a deep sigh, Zhang Xuan activated his Eye of Insight and scanned the tomb once more. After confirming that there was no other mechanism or the sort, Zhang Xuan proceeded forward.

Along both sides of the road were the tombs of the generations of principals, and inscribed on their tombstones were their deeds and experiences they had gone through. Taking a glance at each of them, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but sigh deeply.

As noble and powerful as these men were, most of them didn't live to the end of their lifespan. Instead, most of them had died in battle against the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe.

Take the man who was renowned to possess the greatest talent of all principals of Hongyuan, Mo Liuzhen, for example, he had entered the Subterranean Gallery at one point of his life, only to never return.

Aren't the Otherworldly Demons very rare in the world? Why would so many generations of principals die in their hands? Zhang Xuan contemplated silently.

It had been a year since he had started journeying from Tianxuan Kingdom, and so far, he had only met a single living hybrid Otherworldly Demon, twenty Otherworldly Demon puppets, and the fragmented Vicious.

Hadn't the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe been completely driven out of the Master Teacher Continent many years ago?

But if that was the case, why would so many principals die at their hand?

After glancing at another ten tombstones and receiving no explanation to his question, Zhang Xuan knew that it would be impossible for him to make sense out of this matter for the time being, so he decided to pay no heed to it. *Forget it, I should obtain the Lightning Resonance Stone first. If I really have to face the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe in the future as well, I should first raise my cultivation so that I can stand my ground against them.*

Founder Mu Kai was the first principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, so his tomb was located at the deepest region of the Mausoleum of Principals. After around ten minutes of walking, Zhang Xuan finally arrived before it.

Compared to the others, Founder Mu Kai's tomb seemed rather plain. After kowtowing respectfully several times, he took out the special token he had obtained from Mu Shi's puppet and flicked it toward the other party's tomb.

Kacha!

As the token flew above the tomb, a loud buzz sounded as a certain formation was triggered, and a storage ring abruptly leaped out from the ground.

Zhang Xuan beckoned with his finger, and the storage ring flew into his hand. He swiftly immersed his consciousness inside to take a look.

There are so many treasures in here! There were many valuable ores and artifacts within the storage ring, and the Lightning Resonance Stone was within as well.

These were probably the items that Founder Mu Kai had accumulated over his life.

He had buried them in his tomb as a heritage to the later generations in the hope that it could help them in times of need. This reflected the care and concern he had for the Master Teacher Academy and mankind at large, unable to put down his worries even after his death.

"Thank you," Zhang Xuan whispered as he bowed respectfully to the tomb once more.

Pocketing the token and the storage ring, Zhang Xuan turned around and began making his way out.

Having obtained the Lightning Resonance Stone, it was about time for him to cultivate to Nascent Saint.

It didn't take long for him to arrive at the entrance of the Mausoleum of Principals, where the Mausoleum Tablet was located.

After a moment of silence, Zhang Xuan took out the Copper Bell.

At this moment, the Copper Bell was still nourishing his soul. Its effects weren't

significant at the moment, but with sufficient time, he would be able to sever a portion of his soul safely.

*Forget it, I should just use the Soul Severing Method instead... * Knowing that it would take a considerable amount of time in this manner before he was able to successfully sever his soul, Zhang Xuan shook his head and sat on the floor.

With a thought, he drew his soul out from his glabella.

His soul was massive, around ten meters in height. Executing the Soul Severing Method, which he had learned from Mo Hunsheng, it didn't take long before an identical soul appeared beside him.

"The Soul Severing Method indeed does inflict considerable harm to one's soul..."

After severing his soul, Zhang Xuan's main soul had diminished slightly in size, and he couldn't help but feel extreme fatigue plaguing his existence. Sighing deeply, he shook his head.

Even though he had only severed a portion less than a tenth the size of his original soul, the aftereffects were still difficult for him to bear.

Flicking his wrist, Zhang Xuan took out of the fragmented soul of the Bluehorn Dragon Beast, which he had obtained from Vicious on the Cloudmist Ridge, and began absorbing it to nourish his soul.

The reason Zhang Xuan had chosen to use the Soul Severing Method instead of waiting was because he knew that he could heal the damage sustained by his soul through such a method.

The consciousness of the fragmented soul of the Bluehorn Dragon Beast had been wiped away by Vicious, so he could absorb it without fearing a backlash.

While Zhang Xuan was absorbing the fragmented soul to heal his damaged soul, his severed soul dived into the Copper Bell on its own accord.

If there was no medium to house its severed soul, it would gradually be depleted under the effects of the Five Declines and eventually dissipate entirely.

The Copper Bell served as such a medium, and the same had been done by the

preceding principals as well.

Once I fuse entirely with the Copper Bell, I will just have to enter into the Mausoleum Tablet, Zhang Xuan's severed soul thought.

...

Soon, as Zhang Xuan's severed soul fused entirely with the Copper Bell, he heaved a sigh of relief and gradually flew up before entering the Mausoleum Tablet.

Weng!

As soon as the Copper Bell came into contact with the Mausoleum Tablet, Zhang Xuan's severed soul immediately felt a powerful suction force drawing him in, causing him to disappear on the spot. The next moment, he was already floating within a sealed room.

Rather than calling it a room, perhaps a cavern would be more exact. Zhang Xuan's severed soul suddenly felt a familiar aura in his surroundings that left him with an overwhelming feeling of goosebumps.

This... Isn't this the killing intent of the Otherworldly Demons?

The severed soul narrowed his eyes in astonishment as he froze on the spot.

Chapter 945

Circumstances Shrouding the Mausoleum Tablet

Currently stored within Zhang Xuan's storage ring were twenty Otherworldly Demon puppets and Vicious, so he was extremely familiar with this distinctive aura.

As soon as he came into contact with it, he had no doubt that it belonged to the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe.

But wasn't this the most sacred land in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, the resting place of generations of principals?

How could there be such overwhelming killing intent existent in here?

The Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was callous and brutal, feeding on humans. As such, they were the mortal enemies of the master teachers, such that it was impossible for both to coexist simultaneously. So, how could the aura of the Otherworldly Demons appear there?

Astonished, Zhang Xuan's severed soul quickly took a look around his surroundings.

Judging from the cavern-like surroundings, it seemed like he was within the Mausoleum Tablet. The area was extremely spacious but completely dark. There was no light or air in the area.

It was impossible for any living beings to exist in this space.

It seems like there isn't just killing intent in here. There is also a grand and righteous aura. Soon, Zhang Xuan's severed soul noticed yet another aura lingering in the area.

A grand and righteous aura, an aura distinctive of a master teacher.

Looking around the spacious room, it didn't take long for Zhang Xuan's severed soul to notice a massive abyss. It seemed like the killing intent had come out of this abyss.

Surrounding the abyss were around a hundred different artifacts, which, similar to the

Copper Bell, were used for severing and storing souls, and they were scattered in the area to form a formation. Counting them, there were exactly 102 of them.

These are probably the wills left behind by the preceding principals, Zhang Xuan's severed soul internally.

The other principals had probably used these artifacts to sever and store a fragment of their souls before depositing them into the Mausoleum Tablet.

However, these soul fragments were unlike Zhang Xuan's, which had been severed through the means of the soul oracles. Their movements were limited to the artifact, and they were unable to leave it under normal circumstances, similar to a non-living being.

Realizing something, Zhang Xuan's severed soul was stunned. Could it be that... these soul fragments were left behind not only to assess the future generations of principals, but to... suppress?

The feeling he received was that the grand and righteous auras of the preceding principals, along with the entire Mausoleum Tablet, were suppressing the killing intent contained within the abyss.

Without a doubt, the primary purpose of the wills wasn't to assess the newer generations of principal but to stand guard here.

It can't be that... this is the passageway leading to the otherworldly battlefield of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe?

Hongyuan Empire couldn't be considered powerful in comparison to the Tier-1 Empires around it, but it had still been chosen as the location to construct the Master Teacher Academy. Rumor had it that the reason for this was because a passageway leading to the otherworldly battlefield of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was located on this very land.

As such, the Master Teacher Academy had been built to protect mankind.

Could it be that... this was it?

Was this the passageway leading to the otherworldly battlefield? Was that the reason there was such concentrated killing intent within the abyss?

Was the reason behind the existence of the Mausoleum Tablet and the deposition of the wills of the generations of principals in order to guard this land?

If that were true, that would explain the reason behind the extreme security surrounding the Mausoleum of Principals, forbidding anyone but the current principal from entering. This was probably in order to conceal the existence of the passageway so as to prevent a pandemonium from occurring.

If that's really the case, the preceding principals are indeed figures worthy of respect.

As the principals of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, they had protected the academy with their life when they were still alive, and even upon death, they still continued to guard it with their will. The contribution that master teachers had made to mankind was indeed immeasurable.

Perhaps it was because of this spirit that master teacher possessed that the other occupations viewed them with the utmost respect.

Looking around, Zhang Xuan's severed soul was soon able to confirm his suspicions.

The killing intent emanated from the abyss was powerful, preventing any man from coming close to it. Were it not for the formation set up using the artifacts and wills left behind by preceding principals, it could have built up and destroyed the Mausoleum Tablet, bringing a great calamity upon Hongyuan City.

A grade-7 formation, and one that is set up skillfully at that... Zhang Xuan's severed soul nodded in approval.

The formation wasn't fixed in terms of power. It could be supported by any number of souls, and as the number of souls in the formation increased, the stronger the prowess of the formation.

Principal's Seals are embedded into the formation as well...

The Principal's Seal was an artifact forged out of the wills of students and teachers of the Master Teacher Academy, and it harnessed immense power within it. It was the most suitable artifact to be used to guard this passageway.

After the principal of each generation died, the Principal's Seal belonging to them would be used to augment the formation. It was due to this that Hongyuan Empire had

been able to enjoy significant peace over the past ten thousand years, not threatened by the menace of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe.

Sighing in awe, Zhang Xuan's severed soul was just about to calculate where he should be positioned to maximize the force of the formation when he suddenly heard a deafening roar from the depths of the abyss before him.

Hong long long! Hong long long!

As if struck by a massive torrent, an incredible might jolted the entire Mausoleum Tablet, leaving it shaking uncontrollably, as if it would collapse at any moment.

Tzzzzz!

Following which, Zhang Xuan felt an overwhelming surge of killing intent blasting forth like a tsunami, attempting to charge through the formation blocking its path.

Weng!

The formation immediately lit up and suppressed the killing intent, but the latter seemed to only grow stronger with time. Like a weak net trying to hold in a furiously thrashing fish, the formation seemed as if it would tear apart at any moment soon.

At this rate, the formation won't be able to last much longer. Seeing the sight, Zhang Xuan's severed soul frowned deeply as his complexion darkened.

He could easily assess the limit of the formation and the might of the killing intent with his eye of discernment, and while the formation was still holding back the killing intent for the time being, it was swiftly approaching its limit.

This won't do! With a grim look, Zhang Xuan's severed soul rushed up to the formation and swiftly assessed it with a glint in his eyes. Following which, he raised his leg and kicked a certain spot on the formation.

Weng!

Under his surge of soul energy, the formation emanated a brilliant glow as overwhelming energy suddenly burst forth from it. In an instant, the formation, which seemed as if it would collapse at any time, suddenly stabilized.

Hu hu!

Ten minutes later, the killing intent finally receded, returning calm to the Mausoleum Tablet.

Hu!

Zhang Xuan's severed soul retracted his leg before heaving a huge sigh of relief.

His kick had only served to heighten the prowess of the formation temporarily. It was fortunate that the onslaught of the killing intent hadn't continued for too long, or else the formation would still have eventually collapsed despite his efforts.

While, as a severed soul, he wasn't able to utilize the prowess of the Library of Heaven's Path or the Eye of Insight, his sheer knowledge in the field of formations still allowed him to find the center of the formation and reinforce it.

Why would there be such powerful killing intent in the abyss? Zhang Xuan's severed soul frowned, not comprehending the situation.

Thus, he took a look around the many artifacts used to store the wills of the preceding principals, and soon, he stopped right before a certain artifact and placed his hand on it.

Weng!

The artifact was activated, and a soul appeared before his eyes. It was Founder Mu Kai.

Founder Mu Kai looked at Zhang Xuan and thanked him gratefully. "Principal Zhang, thank you for your assistance. Were it not for your help, our many years of effort might have been for naught then!"

Even though Founder Mu Kai's will had been sealed within the artifact, he was still able to perceive the happenings around him. Had the new principal not made a move and salvaged the situation, it would have been impossible for them to fend off the burst of killing intent from the abyss, nullifying their years of effort.

Zhang Xuan's severed soul waved his hand to show that it was fine before asking, "That thing earlier... what is going on?"

If the formation had been placed under such pressure all this while, there was no way it could have lasted so long.

"Just as you have seen, our wills are here in order to guard the passageway between our Master Teacher Continent and the otherworldly battlefield. All along, it has been rather peaceful except for some slight emanations of killing intent that occur now and then. With the strength of the formation, it doesn't pose a threat at all... But for some reason, two years ago, killing intent suddenly started bursting out of the abyss like a deluge, similar to what you have just witnessed, once every day!"

As he looked at the abyss with a grim expression, Mu shi said, "Initially, the deluge wasn't that powerful, and we could still handle it with our strength. However, over the past month, the deluge has been growing stronger and stronger, and even with each of us exerting our full might, we still found ourselves barely being able to cope. The one that happened today was even worse... Had you not arrived, even if the formation hadn't been completely destroyed, it still would have sustained significant damage!"

"Two years ago?" Zhang Xuan's severed soul asked with a frown.

"Un." Mu shi's will nodded.

"Have you found the reason behind it?" Zhang Xuan asked.

Mu shi's will hesitated for a moment before replying. "Our wills have been fused into the formation, so we aren't able to move easily. As such, we aren't able to investigate what has happened. However, if I am not mistaken, something must have happened to the seal between the Master Teacher Continent and the otherworldly battlefield!"

"Seal?"

"The seal is not located here but in the depths of the Subterranean Gallery. It serves as the final barrier impeding the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe from entering the Master Teacher Continent. Once it is breached, what we might be facing is full-blown war!" Mu shi's will said grimly.

There were several seals set up in the Subterranean Gallery connecting the otherworldly battlefield and the Master Teacher Continent, and the strongest of which was the one that had been set up by countless preceding master teachers in the depths of the passageway.

That seal served as the final fortress of mankind to fend off the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe.

"Principal Zhang, since you have sent your will in here, your main body must be around the area as well. Can you have your main body enter the Subterranean Gallery to take a look so that we can report the matter to the headquarters and have them prepare in advance? Otherwise, I fear that under the relentless deluges of killing intent, the formation might soon fall apart, and a calamity will befall mankind!" Mu shi's will pleaded.

Their wills had been fending off the killing intent for many years, resulting in their strength being gradually worn down over time. On top of that, having fused entirely with the formation, they were unable to move as well.

Even if they wished to investigate the situation, they were unable to do so!

Besides, if they were to leave, there would be nothing to stop the rampage of the killing intent should it strike once more, and that could potentially result in a calamity.

"Enter the Subterranean Gallery?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

"Un. You just have to go in to take a look at the situation so that we can prepare in advance. Otherwise, should something worse come at us, the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy could suffer a devastating blow!" Mu shi's will said worriedly.

Understanding the other party's worries, Zhang Xuan's severed soul hesitated for a moment before asking, "How do I enter the Subterranean Gallery?"

"Due to the overwhelming killing intent contained within the Subterranean Gallery, your soul won't be able to enter its depths. You will have to enter with your physical body!" Mu shi's will said.

"With the Principal's Seal, you should be able to bring your physical body into this space. After which, I will open a temporary hole in the formation so that you can enter the Subterranean Gallery. This entrance is closest to the seal in the depths of the Subterranean Gallery, so it shouldn't take too long."

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan's severed soul frowned.

He had long heard about the dangers lurking within the Subterranean Gallery, and if

he were to enter it, there was a good chance that he would never come out again.

However, if he were to refuse to enter, he would be unable to determine the source of the deluge of killing intent. Furthermore, if something had really happened to the seal in the Subterranean Gallery and it collapsed abruptly, the entire Hongyuan Empire would be devastated by the powerful forces of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe.

"I know that I am putting you on the spot, but... there is nothing else I can do!"

Naturally, Mu shi also understood how dangerous the Subterranean Gallery was. To ask the other party to enter the Subterranean Gallery and check on the seal was almost no different from urging the other party to leap off a cliff. However, the fate of mankind and the future of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy were at stake. He had no other choice.

With the protection of the Principal's Seal, as long as Principal Zhang were to proceed carefully, he should be able to return safely.

"Alright. Give me a moment, I will communicate with my main body to have him enter!" Zhang Xuan's severed soul nodded.

Chapter 946

Entering the Subterranean Gallery

Knowing the severity of this matter, Zhang Xuan, as a 6-star master teacher and the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, knew that he couldn't back down at this point. Thus, he quickly accepted it.

Back then, Kong shi had also ventured into the Subterranean Gallery thrice when he was younger. Zhang Xuan was curious to see what the passageway linking the Master Teacher Continent and the otherworldly battlefield was like as well.

"I will be troubling Principal Zhang then." Mu shi's will clasped his fist and bowed respectfully.

"It is only right that I do so!" Zhang Xuan's severed soul nodded before quickly establishing communication with his main body, which was currently cultivating outside. Not too long later, a silhouette emerged in the room.

It was Zhang Xuan's main body.

Just as Mu shi had said, he was indeed able to enter the space by utilizing the Principal's Seal.

After communicating with his severed soul, he was able to swiftly understand what had happened, and he quickly turned his eyes to Mu shi.

"Open the formation for me, I will head down to take a look!"

"Principal Zhang, be careful. It will suffice as long as you find out what is happening beneath. Even if you fail to do so, it's no problem at all. We can slowly discuss the matter thoroughly to come up with a solution to this problem. No matter what happens, do not act recklessly. Great danger lurks within," Mu shi's will advised.

Investigating the seal was important, but Mu shi's will knew that the man before him was a Celestial Master Teacher, a man who could very well shoulder the fate of humanity one day. Mankind couldn't afford to lose him.

"Rest assured. I am a cowardly person, so I will make sure to steer clear of danger," Zhang Xuan replied with a chuckle.

With his means, even if he couldn't defeat an opponent, he would still be able to escape easily.

"That's good." Receiving his promise, Mu shi's will heaved a sigh of relief before returning back to his position. Clasp the area in front of him, he was able to create a hole in the formation large enough for Zhang Xuan to pass through.

Having studied the formation for more than ten thousand years, it was nothing but a walk in the park for him to create a hole temporarily while fending off the killing intent emanated from the abyss.

"Farewell."

Without any hesitation, Zhang Xuan stepped forward and leaped into the abyss through the hole in the formation.

Hu! His body disappeared in an instant.

"Will he be in danger?" Right after Zhang Xuan disappeared, the silhouette of the will of another principal emerged before Mu shi.

"Don't worry. Back then, Kong shi also entered the Subterranean Gallery when he was only at Half-Saint and returned safely. As a Celestial Master Teacher as well, Zhang shi will surely be able to resolve this crisis!" Mu shi reassured.

"Let's hope that is the case." The other principal nodded, but a worried frown lingered on his face.

There were many Saint realm 1-dan pinnacle experts who had entered the Subterranean Gallery, only to never return. Given that the other party was only a Half-Saint, would he really be able to return safely?

He couldn't help but feel a little concerned.

Noticing the other party principal's expression, Mu shi shook his head helplessly. "There is no use worrying over this matter. You also know that we are swiftly approaching our limits. Over the past two years, we have depleted ourselves

significantly, and our wills are already on the verge of dissipating. If we don't resolve this issue as soon as possible, I fear that... we might just bring an irreversible disaster on ourselves!"

If he had a choice, he wouldn't have wanted to put Principal Zhang in danger either. However, extreme situations called for extreme measures, and there was nothing he could do.

In the first place, the severed souls they had left behind weren't particularly strong, and fending off the many deluges of killing intent that had come over the past two years had worn them thin. Were it not for their unwavering wills tying them down, they might have already dissipated into nothingness.

How else could they have lasted this long?

"This is the responsibility he has to shoulder as a master teacher and the principal of the Master Teacher Academy; Principal Zhang knows this very well himself. Besides, for him to grow, his path can't be all smooth-sailing," Mu shi said.

"You're right." The other principal nodded in agreement before falling silent.

Mu shi was right. Being a master teacher wasn't just about prestige, it was a responsibility.

If he were to escape from even his own responsibility, how could he possibly grow to become a true master teacher?

Principal Zhang might be young, but it seemed like he had a deep understanding of the mission he had to bear as a result of his position.

...

This is the... Subterranean Gallery?

Zhang Xuan felt his entire body tensing up for a moment before his body came to a halt. Straightening his body once more, he immediately scanned his surroundings and realized that he was standing amid a vast underground world.

The entire area was completely dark, devoid of any light. Unable to see the end of the underground world from where he stood, there was no way he could tell how vast and

deep it was. Overwhelming killing intent permeated the area, creating a frigid and eerie atmosphere all around, rendering one unable to breathe normally. Had he not known in advance, he might have thought that he had fallen into an endless hell.

It's no wonder no one is unwilling to come here.

There was no master teacher who wouldn't show a hint of apprehension in his eyes when speaking of the Subterranean Gallery, and from the looks of it now, there was indeed a very good reason for it. This environment was indeed inhospitable.

Just the killing intent drifting in the area could easily erode the minds of those with weaker cultivation realms over time.

This was similar to when Hong shi had taken out an Otherworldly Demon during the Master Teacher Tournament. The examinees had found themselves pressured by the killing intent it exerted to the point that they dared not approach it.

The killing intent felt even more intense and vivid than the one emanated by the Otherworldly Demon back then. It felt as if countless ferocious beasts were hidden amid the darkness, ready to pounce at one the moment one let one's guard down.

If a 5-star master teacher who had never undergone special training to cope with such killing intent were to enter this area, they would surely start trembling uncontrollably from fright, unable to take a single step forward.

If such killing intent were to reach Hongyuan City, it could easily cause a pandemonium that would lead to the deaths of at least 99% of its populace, Zhang Xuan thought grimly.

He hadn't thought much about the significance of the presence of the Subterranean Gallery in Hongyuan City previously, but after coming here, he couldn't help but think about the plausible dire consequences that could be realized should something go wrong.

Such a concentration of killing intent had the ability of causing weaker cultivators to lose their sense of self and turn into killing machines.

Were it to escape and permeate through the entire Hongyuan City, it could very well reduce the majestic city of a hundred million people into rubble within a very short period of time.

Driving his Heaven's Path zhenqi, Zhang Xuan dispelled the pressure from the killing intent entirely before taking a closer look at his surroundings.

The scenery around him was monotonous, just patches of darkness everywhere. Even when using the Eye of Insight, he could only see several hundred meters away.

It was difficult for him to determine his direction in this manner.

Forget it. If I trace the gradient of the killing intent and head toward area with higher concentration, I should be able to reach the depths of the Subterranean Gallery.

Considering that the other end of the Subterranean Gallery was the otherworldly battlefield, Zhang Xuan felt that he should be able to reach the depths of the Subterranean Gallery if he advanced toward areas with a higher concentration of killing intent.

On top of the killing intent, there was also a bizarre demonic tune drifting in the area, beguiling souls within its reach. Those who possessed weaker minds could easily find themselves falling into a trance under its effects, and the affected could very well end up marching to their doom without even realizing it.

It is no wonder Soul Depth is so important to master teachers. Had it been another cultivator possessing the same cultivation as me, it would still have been difficult for them to last too long in here! Zhang Xuan assessed the surroundings warily as he began journeying ahead slowly.

With the omnipresent killing intent and demonic tune in the Subterranean Gallery wearing one down, those who had weaker minds could find themselves succumbing swiftly.

Putting all else aside, even if another Half-Saint expert were to be here, he might find himself losing his mind if he were to stay here for an extended period of time.

However, that was all ineffective against Zhang Xuan. With the Heaven's Path zhenqi guarding his mind, he was impervious to all of it.

After proceeding forward for a moment longer, Zhang Xuan suddenly stopped in his footsteps and frowned deeply. "Hmm? These are footsteps of Otherworldly Demons!"

On the ground just ahead of him was a congregation of innumerable footsteps. Each

of them was around a chi 1 in length.

Zhang Xuan had seen Otherworldly Demons before, and their physique was significantly larger than an ordinary human. Considering how deeply-imprinted and large these footprints were, there was good chance that it was left by them.

But... wasn't there a seal in the depths of the Subterranean Gallery to prevent Otherworldly Demons from entering here?

How could there be Otherworldly Demons on this side?

Wait... there are human footprints too!

Walking along the trail of footsteps, Zhang Xuan suddenly noticed the footsteps of several humans scattered sporadically around the area. On top of that, there were several signs that indicated that a battle had occurred in the area.

From the looks of it, it seemed like human cultivators had encountered the Otherworldly Demons, and a fight had occurred as a result of that.

Zhang Xuan knew that there were human cultivators in the Subterranean Gallery. From time to time, master teachers who found themselves stuck in a bottleneck for an extended period of time or were swiftly approaching the limit of their lifespan would choose to venture into the Subterranean Gallery, hoping that they might be able to find the impetus to push for a breakthrough or to make one final contribution to mankind before their passing.

Activating his Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan studied the marks in the area and frowned. It doesn't seem like it has been too long since these marks were left behind. There is a significantly greater number of Otherworldly Demons as compared to master teachers. If I move quickly, I might still be able to save the master teachers!

From the marks, he could tell that the human cultivators had been in a disadvantageous position in the battle. Overpowered, they had attempted to flee, but the Otherworldly Demons continued to pursue them.

No matter what, I should head over to take a look first.

As a master teacher, he couldn't sit idle while his fellow humans were being harmed by the Otherworldly Demons.

Activating the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps, Zhang Xuan stepped onto the air and advanced swiftly, following the footsteps.

Having cultivated the Saint Ascension Decipher, the amount of zhenqi he had in his body had grown tremendously. In comparison to that, the depletion in maintaining his flight was insignificant.

Concealing his aura and his presence, Zhang Xuan's flew quickly with a sharp glint in his eyes.

In such a dark area, any 6-star master teacher would be forced to proceed warily, especially given the presence of Otherworldly Demons in the area. However, Zhang Xuan's Eye of Insight allowed him to easily see a significant distance ahead of him despite the darkness. Even if there were Otherworldly Demons ahead, he was confident that he would be able to spot the other party first.

After flying for around an hour, there was still no one within Zhang Xuan's sight. However, the marks on the ground were growing more concentrated, indicating that the battle between the escaping human cultivators and Otherworldly Demons was growing more and more intense. Most of the marks were fresh, meaning that he was already very close to them.

Proceeding forward for a moment longer, Zhang Xuan soon felt a violent disturbance in the air. It seemed like a battle was ongoing just ahead.

As Zhang Xuan approached the source of the disturbance, he sealed all of the acupoints throughout his body to conceal his presence completely while gradually slowing down warily. After circling around a hill, he saw a group of Otherworldly Demons standing in front of him.

This... Upon taking a look, Zhang Xuan's eyelids began twitching uncontrollably.

Rather than calling it a group, perhaps an army would be more appropriate.

To his astonishment, there were more than two hundred Otherworldly Demons, and each of them possessed cultivation of at least Saint realm 1-dan. There were even a couple of Saint realm 2-dan experts among them.

It was fortunate that Zhang Xuan had decided to conceal his aura so as to avoid notice. Otherwise, even with the nine kings of the Cloudmist Ridge, Byzantium Helios Beast,

Golden Origin Cauldron, and Myriad Anthive Queen, he would still be tragically defeated.

A race designed for war, the Otherworldly Demons were granted superior strength at birth, and they were capable of even overpowering a saint beast of equal cultivation realm easily. Two hundred Saint realm Otherworldly Demons gathered together... Putting aside him, even a Saint realm 4-dan expert would struggle to cope with such a fearsome force!

How could there be so many of them here? Zhang Xuan's expression was grave.

Two hundred Saint realm 1-dan and several Saint 2-dan Otherworldly Demons, while this force was insufficient to defeat the entire Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, there was no doubt that they would bring catastrophic damage upon Hongyuan City if they were to successfully charge through the formation!

Where in the world did they come from?

The deluges of killing intent striking the Mausoleum Tablet must have been a coordinated assault from this group. It would be impossible to produce a formidable force that could overpower the wills of the hundred preceding principals and their Principal's Seals otherwise! Zhang Xuan realized.

The might of the wills of more than a hundred preceding principals unified and enhanced by a grade-7 formation, further augmented by their Principal's Seals, which harnessed the wills of several dozen million students and teachers throughout the history of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy... yet, the formation had still shaken to the point of near collapse!

Without a doubt, this couldn't have been a natural occurrence. The army of Otherworldly Demons before him had to be behind it.

But who are they fighting with?

Frowning, Zhang Xuan turned his sight toward the human cultivators clashing with them.

It was a group of elders donned in master teacher robes. They were clustered together with their backs against one another, and their bodies and robes were completely dyed crimson with blood. In their eyes, one could see the stolidity of a man who had

accepted his death.

They are 6-star pinnacle master teachers, Zhang Xuan noted.

There were around forty of them.

Suddenly, Zhang Xuan noticed a familiar figure.

Hmm? Lu Feng?

Chapter 947

Don't Have to Say Anything More!

As You Xu's good friend, Lu Feng had caused Zhang Xuan a fair bit of trouble back in the Master Teacher Academy.

However, with the revelation of Zhang Xuan's 'identity', the grand appearance of 'Yang shi' in the Elder Hall, and his confirmation as the next principal of the Master Teacher Academy, Lu Feng had been punished, and he had disappeared from the academy.

According to School Head Mo, Lu Feng had voluntarily applied to head to the Subterranean Gallery in order to redeem himself, and it was very likely that he would never return.

Back then, it had left Zhang Xuan's in deep thought for a long while.

Given how large the Subterranean Gallery was, Zhang Xuan had thought that it was extremely unlikely for him to meet Lu Feng. Who would have thought that he would encounter the other party shortly after entering the Subterranean Gallery and find them cornered?

At this moment, Lu Feng's complexion looked extremely pale and worn out, and the grandeur and authoritative air that had shrouded him back when he was the head of the Apothecary School had faded completely. His left sleeve, where his left arm should have been, was fluttering in the air, and there were many wounds on his body as well. Even though most of them had already closed up, the wounds were still rather glaring and appalling to look at.

Despite the heavy injuries Lu Feng had sustained, his eyes were sharp and calm, as if the battles with the Otherworldly Demons had brought peace to his mind.

As a result of that, his Half-Spiritual Perception realm cultivation had been further reinforced, putting him on the verge of achieving a breakthrough.

Despite the dangers of the Subterranean Gallery, it had allowed him to see past the trivialities of authority and power, thus broadening his mind.

Putting aside Lu Feng, the other 6-star pinnacle master teachers also harnessed incredibly sharp auras that were on par with the vice school heads of the Master Teacher Academy.

However, their ages were already beyond a thousand, and their bodies emanated an aura of deterioration, indicating that they were nearing the limit of their lifespan.

Occasionally, there would be several master teachers who were nearing the end of their life applying to enter the Subterranean Gallery. Their purpose was simple—they hoped to use whatever they had left in them to slay a few more Otherworldly Demons in hopes that it could prolong the peace that mankind enjoyed.

I must find a way to save them, Zhang Xuan thought grimly.

Had it been before, in face of such overwhelming odds, he would never have put his life on the line to save a group of strangers. However, after all he had been through, he realized how much these master teachers had contributed to mankind. It was due to them putting their lives on the line that the Master Teacher Continent was able to enjoy many millenniums of relative peace.

The master teachers before him were figures worthy of his respect, and he couldn't bring himself to leave them in the lurch.

Doing it forcefully won't work. Zhang Xuan frowned.

Against more than two hundred Otherworldly Demons, even if he were to utilize all of the means he had on hand, it would still be impossible for him to save the master teachers. On the contrary, it might even anger the Otherworldly Demons and cause them to fight even more desperately. If that were to happen, he could very well only be hastening their deaths.

As urgent as the situation was, he couldn't charge in recklessly. He needed to come up with a plan first, a plan that would allow him to eradicate the Otherworldly Demons and save the master teachers.

After a moment of thought, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and took out a book. "Vicious, do you have any way to disguise me as an Otherworldly Demon?"

Bypassing the encirclement of more than two hundred Otherworldly Demons discreetly to save the master teachers, such a feat was nigh impossible... unless he was

an Otherworldly Demon!

"You want to disguise as one of my tribesmen?"

The heart in the book beat several times before replying. "That's simple! Master, given that you have cultivated the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body, you should be able to alter your height and weight at will. As for the killing intent, I can release it in your place. It might be difficult for this disguise to fool the Otherworldly Demon Emperors, but it should be more than sufficient for this group of peons!"

The most difficult aspect when disguising as an Otherworldly Demon was imitating their killing intent. As long as this problem was resolved, the other aspects regarding the outer appearance weren't a problem at all.

Zhang Xuan had already reached the Fourth Incandescence for the Quintuple Incandescence Golden body, allowing him to alter his muscles and bone structure at will.

"Alright, I will give it a try."

Hearing that it was feasible, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. Using one of the puppets in his storage ring as a model, he began to warp his muscles and bones amid a series of cracks. In just two breaths, his appearance had already changed altogether.

After which, he took off the clothes of his puppet and wore them. At this moment, he looked completely identical to an Otherworldly Demon in terms of appearance, such that even most master teachers would be unable to tell the difference.

"Master, hide my finger in your hand, and I will exert my killing intent from within your body so that others won't notice it," Vicious said after seeing that Zhang Xuan was done with his transformation.

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Hu!

A finger emerged from the Book of Heaven's Path and fell on his hand. It fused into his skin and disappeared within.

Following which, Zhang Xuan felt a unique energy flowing through his body, one that

was completely different from a cultivator's zhenqi.

This energy felt exceedingly violent, as if it would rip apart the world if it could. If one were to come into contact with this energy often, it would induce aggressive tendencies within one, making one crave war and battle.

"This is the source of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe's killing intent?" Zhang Xuan asked with a frown.

It was no wonder the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was so belligerent. There was probably no one in the world who would be able to remain themselves after cultivating such zhenqi.

"Un. We call this Zhenqi of Slaughter!" Vicious replied before asking with a doubtful tone, "Master, do you feel any discomfort driving the Zhenqi of Slaughter?"

"Discomfort?" Zhang Xuan tried circulating the Zhenqi of Slaughter through his body, and eventually, he shook his head with an excited glint in his eyes. "None at all. If any, I feel energized!"

"Energized?" Vicious was stunned.

Ordinary cultivators, even one who had reached Saint realm, were unable to withstand the Zhenqi of Slaughter. Yet, his master was actually able to drive it as he wished without feeling the slightest discomfort... and even feel energized at that.

Wasn't his body's ability to adapt a little too powerful?

"It's good that you don't feel any discomfort!" Vicious heaved a sigh of relief.

Having pledged his loyalty to Zhang Xuan, he had to ensure the latter's safety. He was planning to withdraw his zhenqi if the other party felt any discomfort, but since there was no such thing, it should be fine.

Knowing that Vicious was thinking about, Zhang Xuan replied with a nod. "Un."

Given that his body was even to harness the might of the Heaven's Path zhenqi, what could the Zhenqi of Slaughter do?

A thought suddenly emerged in Zhang Xuan's mind. Wait... since the Heaven's Path

zhenqi has the ability to imitate the attributes of other zhenqi, could it possibly imitate the Zhenqi of Slaughter too?

He had always thought of the killing intent as an aura emanated by the Otherworldly Demons, but if its true form was a type of zhenqi as well, was it possible for him to imitate it?

The Heaven's Path zhenqi was an omnipotent zhenqi. Possessing no attribute, it was capable of fusing with the zhenqi of any other attribute and emulating its properties.

With such thoughts in mind, he began to warp the properties of the Heaven's Path zhenqi in his body. His body jolted for an instant as the Heaven's Path zhenqi began to seethe. A moment later, a powerful killing intent abruptly gushed into the air. It wasn't as powerful as the one originating from Vicious' finger, but it was far purer and cleaner.

Just as Zhang Xuan was delighted with his success, he suddenly heard Vicious' voice in his ear. "Grand Emperor... How is this possible? Master... are you an Otherworldly Demon in disguise?"

"Grand Emperor?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback for a moment before bursting into laughter. "An Otherworldly Demon in disguise? How is that possible?"

It was not like the other party didn't know that he was a Celestial Master Teacher. How could he possibly be an Otherworldly Demon?

"Otherworldly Demons are ranked in various strata according to their bloodline. The Emperor Stratum has the purest bloodline, followed by the King Stratum, the Marquess Stratum, Noble Stratum, and finally, the Mortal Stratum. Each stratum is further divided into several classes, and the strongest one within the Emperor Stratum is the Grand Emperor Class," Vicious said. "The zhenqi that Master has just exerted is extremely pure, a trait distinctive of the Grand Emperor Class."

"Grand Emperor Class?" Zhang Xuan blinked in astonishment.

He had just casually emulated the Zhenqi of Slaughter with his Heaven's Path zhenqi, but to think that... it would actually be so formidable.

"Yes!" Vicious replied respectfully. At the same time, he couldn't help but harbor some doubts regarding his master's identity.

The other party was clearly a Celestial Master Teacher, and yet, putting aside how he didn't feel the slightest discomfort driving the Zhenqi of Slaughter, his body actually harnessed zhenqi exclusive to the Grand Emperor Class.

Just how many more secrets was his master hiding?

"If I am at the Grand Emperor Class, what about you?" Zhang Xuan asked.

Given the extreme purity of the Heaven's Path zhenqi, it went without saying that his emulation of the Zhenqi of Slaughter would also be of the highest class. However, judging from Vicious' astonished tone, could this mean that he wasn't from the Grand Emperor Class?

Wasn't he one of the strongest experts from the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe?

Otherwise, how could he have stood his ground against Kong shi?

"I..." With a bitter smile, Vicious was just about to explain himself when he suddenly realized something and hurriedly warned Zhang Xuan telepathically, "Master, we have been discovered!"

"We have been discovered?" Taken aback, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze upwards. What he saw left his eyelids twitching uncontrollably, and he nearly fainted on the spot.

Unbeknownst to him, fifty Otherworldly Demons were floating in the air above him, each of them exerting an extremely powerful aura. They had sealed the surroundings tightly with their Zhenqi of Slaughter, leaving him no opportunity to escape at all.

Hadn't he concealed his presence well?

How had he been discovered just like that?

To have been encircled before he could initiate his plan to save the master teachers... this sure was a huge failure!

I must have failed to control my strength properly in the moment that I turned my Heaven's Path zhenqi into Zhenqi of Slaughter, Zhang Xuan thought as his face twitched.

As he had wished, his Heaven's Path zhenqi had turned into the Zhenqi of Slaughter

unique to Otherworldly Demons perfectly. However, he had failed to control his power for a brief moment, resulting in his killing intent bursting into the air.

It was probably that brief moment that had betrayed his presence to the Otherworldly Demons.

Hualala!

Just as Zhang Xuan was at a loss as to what he should do, the Otherworldly Demons in the sky finally got a clear look at Zhang Xuan's face, and the tense atmosphere in the surroundings alleviated slightly. After which, a Saint realm 2-dan Otherworldly Demon descended from the sky and went up to Zhang Xuan.

"Who are you?" the Saint realm 2-dan Otherworldly Demon asked questioningly.

"Me?" It was only at this moment that Zhang Xuan suddenly recalled that he had already changed his appearance and was wearing the clothes of the Otherworldly Demons.

An overpowering killing intent was emanating from his body, making it clear to anyone that he was an Otherworldly Demon.

The other party must have thought that he was their tribesmen, but owing to his unfamiliar face, the other party still had to confirm his identity.

"I am..." Heaving a sigh of relief, Zhang Xuan prepared himself to make up a name so as to get over this matter. In any case, there were so many Otherworldly Demons about, so it was unlikely for the other party to recognize everyone.

However, at that moment, a thought suddenly came to him.

The next moment, he narrowed his eyes and took a deep breath. Following which, the Zhenqi of Slaughter from Vicious' finger burst forth.

Hong long!

While the killing intent emanated from his disguised Heaven's Path zhenqi was pure, it was only at the level of a Half-Saint. On the other hand, the killing intent from Vicious' finger was overwhelming and relentless, leaving one unable to determine how powerful he was, as if looking at a seemingly endless ocean.

"Th-this..." Feeling that immense strength, the Saint realm 2-dan Otherworldly Demon's face paled, and his body stiffened.

"I don't have to say anything more about my identity, right?" Placing his hands behind his back, Zhang Xuan glanced down at the other party impassively.

Zhang Xuan currently held no intelligence on the current state of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe at all. Vicious might know a thing or two, but his intelligence was already outdated by several dozen years. On top of that, his memories were fragmented, so it might not be safe to rely on it.

While he could simply make up a name on the spot, there was a chance that things could go wrong too. For example, what if the name he came up with wasn't typical or was avoided by the Otherworldly Demons? If so, he would be placed in an extremely difficult position.

Besides, even if he were to successfully come up with a name and join the other party's group, it was unlikely that the other party would trust him enough to allow him to approach the master teachers. It would still be extremely difficult for him to save them.

Thus, the best way was for him to assume an identity that the other party feared.

Since the Otherworldly Demons were ranked according to the purity of their Zhenqi of Slaughter, he could very well make use of it to instill fear in them.

He was already proficient in it anyway. He had done it so many times that it came naturally to him.

Don't have to say anything more about your identity?

On the other hand, the Saint realm 2-dan Otherworldly Demon was taken aback.

I have never seen you before, so how am I supposed to know who the hell you are?

Chapter 948

Master, I Am Tough!

However, the Saint realm 2-dan Otherworldly Demon wasn't bewildered for too long. The zhenqi exerted by the other party was incredibly condensed and powerful, reminiscent of a towering mountain. Without a doubt, the other party had to be a King at the very least.

Even if he didn't know who the other party was, one thing was for certain—the other party's standing was far above his.

Seeing the other party stuttering in uncertainty, unsure of what was going on, Zhang Xuan frowned in displeasure and bellowed furiously, "You don't even know me? Men, drag this moron down and execute him!"

"This..."

This time, it wasn't just the Saint realm 2-dan Otherworldly Demon who was stunned. The Otherworldly Demons in the area were completely dumbstruck as well.

To speak of beheading our leader like that, who the hell do you think you are?

Which asylum did you run out from?

"Could it be..."

The Saint realm 2-dan Otherworldly Demons was extremely frustrated, and he had no idea what he was supposed to do. However, at that very moment, a thought flickered across his head and a certain name surfaced in his mind, and his face warped in astonishment. "Could you be... the Goldenleaf King?"

Rumor had it that the Goldenleaf King was a combative and vicious person, often assaulting others over the slightest verbal disagreement.

He had never seen the Goldenleaf King before, having only heard of the other party's name. However, considering the pure energy the person before him was emanating,

as well as his arrogant disposition, threatening to kill him despite having only met moments ago, he couldn't help but wonder if the other party was indeed him.

"Humph, seeing how fast you reacted, I will let you off this time!" Harrumphing coldly, Zhang Xuan tilted his head up haughtily.

"The leader of the 214th Squadron of Greenleaf King, Tong Yue, pays respect to Your Highness!"

Upon seeing that he had identified the other party correctly, the Saint realm 2-dan Otherworldly Demon, Tong Yue, heaved a sigh of relief before hurriedly kneeling onto the ground to greet the other party. After which, he couldn't help but ask doubtfully, "Our King has said that he will be coming over soon, and he asked us to make preparations. That is why we captured these master teachers in order to prepare the tributes to gather the required energy to break the seal for his arrival. But... how did you come over without any tribute?"

It would be a lie if he said that he wasn't perplexed by the abrupt arrival of the esteemed figure before him.

The areas of jurisdiction of their direct superior, Greenleaf King, and Goldenleaf King were extremely far from one another, so the both of them didn't have much contact with one another.

Furthermore, the Greenleaf King had paid a heavy price using a special ritual in order to send them over one by one. It was only recently that the Greenleaf King had issued an order for them to hunt down master teachers and have them serve as tributes so as to allow him to bypass the seal and come over. They weren't even done preparing for their own King to come over, but the Goldenleaf King was already here?

What was going on?

"What? Are you actually asking me to report my activities to you?" Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up as his eyes narrowed menacingly. Emanating a wintry killing intent, Zhang Xuan berated condescendingly, "You disrespectful lowlife, are you asking to be killed right here, right now? Do you think that I dare not touch you just because you are the Greenleaf King's subordinate?"

"I..." Tong Yue's body stiffened as cold sweat began trickling from his forehead.

The other party possessed the bloodline of a King whereas he was just an ordinary soldier. Even if the other party were to kill him, he had no doubt that the Greenleaf King wouldn't speak up for him.

This was the difference in their identity and standing!

"I dare not!" Tong Yue swiftly kneeled to the ground fearfully, not daring to even breathe loudly.

He had long heard that rules were mere words in the eyes of the Goldenleaf King, and there was nothing that the other party dared not do. He had always thought that it was just an exaggeration, but seeing it with his own eyes... the other party was indeed a madman.

"That had better be the truth!" Zhang Xuan harrumphed coldly before turning his eyes away from Tong Yue. He took a step forward before pointing at Lu Feng and the others and asking, "What's with them?"

"We were intending to capture this bunch and have them serve as tributes to break the seal for our King's arrival," Tong Yue hurriedly explained.

"Tributes? For the Greenleaf King's arrival?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

He wasn't too sure how it worked, but he was still able to get a rough idea as to what was going on from the other party's words.

It seemed like he had arrived at a timely moment. Considering how fearsome the ordinary soldiers were, if an Otherworldly Demon King were to breach the seal and come over, wouldn't Hongyuan City be reduced to hell in an instant?

Noticing the displeasure on the Goldenleaf King's face, Tong Yue's lips twitched as he quickly realized what was going on. Thus, he anxiously said, "We were intending to usher in our king, but since Your Highness is here, there is no longer any need for that. I will have these fellows killed this very instant."

It took more than strength to become a Squadron Leader. Tong Yue wasn't a foolish person, and he was very sharp at reading the mood as well.

While he had not heard about any grudge between the Greenleaf King and the Goldenleaf King, considering that the Goldenleaf King was already here, bringing the

Greenleaf King here could be viewed as an attempt to undermine his authority, and that was no different from seeking death.

Thus, he turned around to the Otherworldly Demons behind him and waved his hand. "Men, kill all of those fellows here!"

"Yes, leader!" Upon hearing the order, the Otherworldly Demons began marching toward the encircled Lu Feng and the others with overwhelming killing intent.

"Comrades, it seems like we might be meeting our end here."

"From the moment I walked in here, I have never thought about leaving alive. So what if I meet my end here? Take one down, and I will have recouped my loss; take two down, and I will have profited!"

"Haha, come! Let me give you a taste of your grandfather's strength!"

"Even if I die, I will make sure to pull a couple of them down with me..."

Seeing that the Otherworldly Demons were going to kill them, the master teachers trapped in the center roared in laughter, seemingly devoid of any fear for their impending doom.

Just as Zhang Xuan had guessed, these 6-star pinnacle master teachers were either those whose cultivation had stagnated at a certain point or those whose lifespan had reached its limit.

From the moment they stepped into the Subterranean Gallery, they had already prepared themselves mentally to meet their end.

Having served as a master teacher for a lifetime, dying in the midst of battling the Otherworldly Demon could be considered a fine conclusion to the end of their journey.

As such, they didn't feel fear when they heard that the other party was going to kill them. On the contrary, their fighting will flared instead.

What is there to rejoice about birth, what is there to fear about death?¹

Another Otherworldly Demon killed meant another step toward mankind's peace. Even if death was their end, they had no regrets.

"You wretched things, the only reason you are still alive is because you were going to serve as tributes for our honored King. Now that our King is here, your existence serves no purpose anymore!" Tong Yue harrumphed coldly as he raised his hand.

Huala!

Many Otherworldly Demons raised their hands simultaneously as a devastating energy gathered among them.

The energy gathered was so immense and destructive that if it were to be released, the already severely injured master teachers would die without fail.

With a deep frown, Zhang Xuan bellowed loudly, "Hold it for a moment!"

Hearing his bellow, the Otherworldly Demons, who were prepared to launch an attack, swiftly halted their movements. Tong Yue also turned a doubtful gaze to Zhang Xuan.

The Goldenleaf King was known to be callous and vicious, never hesitating to claim the life of another. This was precisely why Tong Yue was so fearful of him. So, why would the other party suddenly ask him to stop?

"Spare them, I still have questions for them," Zhang Xuan commanded coldly.

From his experience disguising as Yang Shi, he had learned the art of feigning as an expert. On top of that, through Vicious' powerful and devastating aura, he had already created a powerful first impression, which granted him more room to maneuver.

"Yes!" Hearing that the Goldenleaf King had some questions for the master teachers, Tong Yue immediately waved his hands to gesture for the Otherworldly Demons to step down.

Even so, the Otherworldly Demons didn't let their guard down. They continued to maintain their encirclement around the master teachers, ready to strike should any of them attempt to flee.

"May I know what Your Highness intends to ask? I will immediately have my men interrogate them." Tong Yue turned to Zhang Xuan and clasped his fist respectfully. A moment later, fearing that the latter would misunderstand, he quickly added, "These master teachers are obstinate fools. Without using some special means, it won't be possible to obtain accurate intelligence from them!"

It hadn't been long since he had arrived at the Subterranean Gallery, but he had already come into contact with many master teachers. Those fellows had an unyielding faith in their mission, making it nigh impossible to get any useful information out of them through a normal interrogation.

How could a person who didn't even fear death succumb to an average interrogation?

Placing his hands behind his back, Zhang Xuan replied haughtily as he gazed into the distance, as if contemplating about the greater matters of the world. "There is no need for that. This matter involves confidential secrets that the likes of you aren't qualified to know. You just have to find me a quiet place for me to interrogate them privately!"

In that moment, he exuded an unfathomable aura.

"Yes!" Hearing that the other party wanted to interrogate the master teachers personally, Tong Yue hesitated for a moment before clasp his fist. "Your Highness, our temporary camp is not too far from here. Why don't we head there to interrogate these wretched master teachers? This way, we will be able to prevent them from escaping as well!"

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded.

He could tell that Tong Yue still harbored some reservations toward him, which was only natural given that he had appeared out of nowhere. At this point, it would be too unnatural if he tried to take them away willfully.

He would have to bide his time and wait for an ideal opportunity to strike.

Furthermore, his purpose there was to investigate the situation with the Otherworldly Demons and rid the threats that were lurking in the darkness. This was a good chance for him to scout the situation.

"This way, please!" Nodding, Tong Yue hurriedly stepped forward and led the way.

Without saying a word, Zhang Xuan stepped into the air and began following behind Tong Yue closely while asking Vicious discreetly, "The Goldenleaf King that he spoke of, have you heard of him before?"

"How can I possibly know these juniors? Most likely, Tong Yue has never met that Goldenleaf King before and simply thought that you are him due to your pure and

powerful zhenqi."

At which, Vicious paused to ponder for a moment before continuing his explanation. "There is a very strict hierarchy among the Otherworldly Demons. The purer an Otherworldly Demon's Zhenqi of Slaughter is, the higher their standing will be. My finger has just barely recovered and is still far from exerting the immense force it wielded back when I was at my peak. Nevertheless, the zhenqi it exerts is still far beyond the reach of mortals like them!"

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded quietly.

This was also what he thought as well.

Vicious had been one of the strongest emperors of the Otherworldly Demon back when he was at his peak. Even if his finger was far weaker than it was back then, the purity of the energy it exerted was still far beyond the likes of those fellows.

Furthermore, his disguise was also nigh perfect, so it shouldn't come as a surprise that the other party would think of him as the Goldenleaf King or something.

"With your current prowess, are you able to deal with those fellows?" Zhang Xuan asked.

It wouldn't be safe to leave such a large group of Otherworldly Demons lurking in the Subterranean Gallery. If Vicious could destroy these fellows easily, he wouldn't have to go through too much trouble getting rid of them later on.

"The most powerful attack I have at the moment is my killing intent. It is extremely effective against those of differing races, but against fellow Otherworldly Demons, I fear that its effectiveness will be negligible," Vicious said awkwardly.

He had always boasted about how powerful he was, but in real times of need, he turned out to be useless.

Having taken aback his finger, his fighting prowess had been enhanced considerably, allowing him to engage in physical fights. However, it would still be extremely difficult for him to stand his ground against so many opponents simultaneously.

Furthermore, his strongest attack was his killing intent. It was indeed formidable against master teachers and saint beasts; those who were afflicted by it would find

their bodies stiffening on the spot, rendering them powerless.

However, against his fellow Otherworldly Demons, who cultivated the Zhenqi of Slaughter as well, his killing intent was nearly ineffective.

"I see."

Seeing Vicious denying the matter so quickly, Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly as he muttered beneath his breath, "I was just thinking how formidable you are, but to think that you are nothing more than a solder spear², useless in times to need..."

Hearing those words, Vicious staggered and nearly burst into tears.

Master, I am not a solder spear. I am tough, very, very tough...

Chapter 949

Who Called for Me?

In the time that the duo spent talking, the other Otherworldly Demons subdued Lu Feng and the others and forced them to move along with them.

From the very start, they were already depleted from the extended battle they had against so many Otherworldly Demons simultaneously, so they weren't able to put up much of a fight. In fact, were it not for the fact that they were needed to serve as tribute to bypass the seal, they would have already been killed long ago.

While they were attacked by the Otherworldly Demons, Zhang Xuan didn't bother saying anything or even spare a glance at them.

Since Tong Yue thought that he was the Goldenleaf King, the other party wouldn't dare kill any of the master teachers, and as long as they were still alive, he would have a chance to save them.

Proceeding ahead, it didn't take long before Zhang Xuan saw a vast area filled with massive buildings on the horizon.

Innumerable buildings that extended for over several li were built against a mountain, concealed discreetly amid the darkness. A cold and sinister atmosphere drifted around those buildings, leaving one with a disturbing feeling within.

It's so big? Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up.

The Subterranean Gallery was the passageway connecting the Master Teacher Continent to the otherworldly battlefield. Under normal circumstances, there shouldn't have been too many Otherworldly Demons lurking in the area. Yet, the buildings were extended over such an unbelievably huge area that it could even house several hundred thousand individuals simultaneously. Was it possible that a huge army of Otherworldly Demons had already breached the seal and was currently stationed in the area?

If that was the case, Hongyuan Empire was truly deep in danger.

It would already be difficult for Tier-1 Empire to hold its ground against two hundred Otherworldly Demons. If several hundred thousand were to pop out at once, probably even Qingyuan Conferred Empire would be shaken at its core.

Following behind Tong Yue, Zhang Xuan discreetly activated his Eye of Insight to look into the interior of the buildings.

To his relief, there weren't any traces of life within.

"Your Highness, this is the base we have built over the past two months, and it is large enough to house tens of thousands of people within it comfortably without any problem! There won't be any problem with the lodging once our great army arrives!" Tong Yue explained with a fawning smile.

"Un." Deactivating his Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan directed a nod toward Tong Yue while heaving a sigh of relief inwardly.

So, the buildings were just prepared by them in advance. For a moment, he had thought that they were already filled with Otherworldly Demons.

From the looks of it, it seemed like something had happened to the seal. However, it hadn't reached the level where they could enter or leave freely.

Based on Tong Yue's words, he was able to deduce two things.

Firstly, master teachers had to be offered as tributes for the Greenleaf King guy to come over. From the looks of it, the requirement for his crossing was significantly harsher than others.

Secondly, the group he was with was likely the scouting party. Their main mission seemed to be to prepare for the arrival of the main army, such as building a base and finding ways to undermine the seal. Once they succeed, it wouldn't be long before the great army of the Otherworldly Demons arrived.

If that was the case, Hongyuan Empire would be in deep trouble.

With such thoughts in mind, Zhang Xuan followed behind Tong Yue and descended among the buildings.

There were significant differences between the Otherworldly Demons' buildings and

those constructed by humans, and it felt like they were carefully designed to enhance the concentration of killing intent in the area. If one were to cultivate the Zhenqi of Slaughter here, one's rate of cultivation would surely be much faster than normal.

From the looks of it, the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe wasn't lacking in talent either. At the very least, they possessed means that were on par with the human's formation masters.

But that was only to be expected. If they hadn't possessed such immense strength, they wouldn't have been able to dominate the other races for so many years until Kong shi's emergence.

Tong Yue turned to Zhang Xuan and said, "I have long heard that Your Highness possesses a deep understanding of architecture and formations. Please do enlighten us if anything is inappropriate, I will have my men alter it immediately."

"It's..." Zhang Xuan was just about to say that it was fine and that no changes had to be made when a sudden realization struck him, and he abruptly stopped halfway through his words.

It seemed like Tong Yue was trying to sound him out to verify his identity.

He had no way of telling whether the Goldenleaf King was truly skilled in the field of architecture and formations at all, so he had to be careful with how he answered this question. If he were to come up with a correct alteration but the Goldenleaf King turned out to be unskilled in the field, that would be as good as giving himself away. The same applied if he were to come up with an inaccurate alteration and the Goldenleaf King turned out to be unskilled... This was truly a huge trouble.

That fellow sure was a sharp person, laying out a subtle trap for him so easily.

If he were to give the wrong response, he could very well end up turning the two hundred Otherworldly Demons against him in an instant.

On the other hand, if he were to refuse to respond, putting aside how the other party's suspicions of him would deepen, such attempts would also come time and time again at him, and it would only be a matter of time before he gave himself away.

"Is that how you speak to your King as well?" Zhang Xuan's complexion darkened in fury.

Since it was impossible for him to come up with a correct answer to the question with any certainty, the only way for him was to change the subject.

"I..." Noting Zhang Xuan's fury, Tong Yue's body immediately stiffened. He suddenly realized that the words he had spoken were slightly disrespectful, and his face paled in fright.

As a lofty King, the other party would speak on his own accord if he wished to offer any words of enlightenment. Otherwise, it wasn't his place as a subordinate to ask about it either.

"Enough! I don't have time to waste my breath with you. Take those master teachers to a secret chamber and have your men stay away from the area. I don't want anyone within thirty meters of the chamber while I am interrogating them!" Zhang Xuan roared furiously, turning the other party's attention away from the previous subject completely.

"Yes!" On the other hand, Tong Yue heaved a sigh of relief when he saw that the Goldenleaf King had no intentions of pursuing the matter. He swiftly left the area to make arrangements, and sometime later, he returned to the room. "Your Highness, I had my men imprison them in the hall just in front."

"Good." Zhang Xuan nodded.

"Your Highness, you must be wary. The humans are known to be cunning and scheming, and I fear that they might mean you harm," Tong Yue advised.

"They are nothing but a bunch of puny insects! They won't be able to harm me even if I stand on the spot and let them attack!" With his hands behind his back, Zhang Xuan sneered coldly as a powerful aura burst forth from him.

"Yes!" Feeling the incredible power emanated by the other party, Tong Yue's eyebrows shot up in alarm.

With the strength the other party had displayed, it would take nothing more than a finger for the other party to crush him.

"Tell your men to steer clear. I will be right back!" Harrumphing coldly, Zhang Xuan walked out of the room.

"Yes!" Tong Yue nodded with a lowered head. It was only after the figure before him finally disappeared from sight that he finally turned around with a frown and bellowed, "Men!"

A moment later, an Otherworldly Demon rushed in hurriedly and bowed. "Leader!"

"You, head to the seal right now and check with the personnel stationed there if anyone had arrived today," Tong Yue commanded.

"Yes!" The Otherworldly Demon quickly nodded before rushing out.

The killing intent and prowess demonstrated by the other party was indeed on par with the Kings, but Tong Yue still felt that there was a need to verify this matter. Too much was at stake, and no mistake could be tolerated.

...

In the hall, Lu Feng and the others were lying feebly on the ground, their bodies bound with heavy shackles. Their cultivation had also been sealed through special means.

"It seems like we won't be getting out of this alive," one of the master teachers said with a bitter smile.

"Indeed. The only regret I have is that I did not slay more Otherworldly Demons." Another old man shook his head and sighed.

"Don't you think that it is a little bizarre that they are keeping us alive to interrogate us? But regardless of what their intentions are, they sure won't be getting a single word out of me!" a master teacher spat through gritted teeth.

The Otherworldly Demons and master teachers viewed one another as nemeses. It was perplexing that the Otherworldly Demons would keep them alive even though they served no value at this point.

But even if they were to die, they would never allow themselves to become a traitor of mankind.

One of the elders couldn't help but ask in curiosity, "Speaking of which... The reason we are here is because our lives are already approaching their limits, but Lu Feng, you still have many years ahead of you. Furthermore, you are the esteemed head of the

Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy's Apothecary School. Why would a person like you come to the Subterranean Gallery?"

Hearing the question, the others also turned their gazes over.

Under the furious pursuit of the Otherworldly Demons over the past few days, they hadn't had the luxury of time to chat with one another. At this moment, however, since their fate was already sealed, they wished to at least unravel this mystery before their deaths.

Those who would descend to the Subterranean Gallery were those who had found themselves nearing the end of their paths. However, Lu Feng was not only the head of the number one school in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, he was also at Half-Spiritual Perception realm, which meant that it was highly likely he could advance further to Saint realm 2-dan. Why would a person like him with such a bright future ahead descend into the Subterranean Gallery like them?

"This is truly a long story! I can only say that I have erred..." Lu Feng shook his head.

Had he not provoked Zhang Xuan, he wouldn't have landed himself in such a state.

"What happened? Did someone frame you?" Another master teacher couldn't help but ask.

"I offended someone that I shouldn't have, so I voluntarily applied to come down here!" Lu Feng said.

He had encountered many life-threatening situations since arriving here, but he didn't regret his decision at all.

He was contributing to mankind back when he was an esteemed head of the Apothecary School, and he was also doing the same down here as well. The only difference was that he would die a silent and unsung death.

"You offended someone?" The others were even more perplexed.

Who in the world did the stand-in principal of the Master Teacher Academy, a powerful Half-Spiritual Perception realm expert, offend to have to be forced to come to these desolate grounds?

"Indeed, I offended a student." Lu Feng nodded.

"A student?" The others were stunned.

You are a member of the Ten Great Master Teachers and the stand-in principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy! To be reduced to this state from offending a student... Just what kind of student wields such frightening power?

An elder suddenly thought of something and asked, "Was it... an offspring from one of the Sage Clans?"

"No, he is just an ordinary student from Huanyu Empire," Lu Feng replied.

"From Huanyu Empire?" The group stared at one another in bewilderment.

A student from a Tier-2 Empire was actually able to force the stand-in principal to enter the Subterranean Gallery? What was going on?

"I knew that you all won't believe me. To tell you the truth, I have been musing over this matter for the past few days, and I still feel as if I was dreaming!"

Taking everyone's expression into sight, a bitter smile surfaced on Lu Feng's lips. "Why don't I tell you about his deeds after entering the academy? You should be able to understand it after that."

Shaking his head, Lu Feng began to recount the many things that had happened ever since Zhang Xuan enrolled into the Master Teacher Academy. As the matter regarding Yang Shi concerned the privacy of a higher ranked master teacher, he neglected to mention him.

"A twenty-year-old lad challenged Vice School Head You Xu to a Life-and-Death Physician Duel, and the latter actually lost?"

"His lecture actually caused all of the teachers and students to leave the Apothecary School?"

"He successfully tamed a Saint realm 2-dan beast at his young age?"

"The Master Teacher Academy's Golden Origin Cauldron acknowledged him as its master after he touched it?"

...

Hearing about the various matters concerning Zhang Xuan had left everyone dumbstruck.

Who could have imagined that a student could actually cause such a huge ruckus within several months of enrolling into the academy?

Was this for real?

"How did you end up offending a genius of such caliber?" one of the master teachers asked.

Such a talent would eventually become the pride and honor of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy. Given so, Lu Feng should have been intent on getting on good terms with the other party. Why would he have a conflict with him instead?

"It is because his talents are too formidable that I suspected that he is... a King of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. Otherwise, how could a person that young gain such a deep understanding of so many supporting occupations and wield such extraordinary strength?"

At this point, Lu Feng shook his head bitterly and said, "Only a little later did I realize how ridiculous my suspicions were!"

From the moment he met Yang shi, he immediately realized how ludicrous his suspicions that Zhang Xuan was an Otherworldly Demon King were.

How could the student of a Celestial Master Teacher possibly be an Otherworldly Demon? This notion in itself was a huge joke!

"Ridiculous? Why would it be ridiculous? If I was in your place, I would have thought the same as well. After all, no matter how talented a person is, there is a limit to how much he can achieve within a limited period of time. Considering the vast knowledge he has displayed despite only being twenty, it is only natural for one to doubt his origins!"

"I share the same thoughts as well."

"You were sent here just because you doubted him?"

The other master teachers frowned in indignation for Lu Feng.

Wasn't it making a big fuss out of nothing to issue such a harsh punish to an esteemed head of the Apothecary School for something as minor as that?

"You don't understand. Zhang shi is..." Seeing that the others had misunderstood what he was saying, Lu Feng shook his head and began to explain, but at that moment, the doors to the hall abruptly opened, 'jiya', and a head popped in through the crack of the door.

A pair of large eyes stared intently at the master teachers.

"Who called for me?"

The bright smile on the large face looked extraordinarily unnerving.

Chapter 950

Ingrate

"Called for you?"

Looking at the Goldenleaf King, who was going to interrogate them, the mouths of the master teachers twitched uncontrollably.

We were talking about the conflict between the new principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy and Lu Feng, who in the world called for you?

Can you stop being so narcissistic?

Lu Feng's eyes also began flying around the place.

Who in the world would call for you given that ugly face you have?

Just as he was about to speak, the tall and ugly fellow walked over and said, "I was just thinking about how I should explain it to you all, but since you have already recognized me, I guess there's no longer any need."

Walking up to the master teachers, the ugly fellow stretched his hands forward to release the shackles binding them.

"What are you doing?" Everyone leaped in shock, alarmed by the other party's actions.

Explain?

Recognized?

Recognized your head! We are righteous master teachers! We have never come into contact with any Otherworldly Demons before, so don't you act chummy with us! Who in the hell knows you?

Seeing the master teachers acting warily around him despite clearly knowing his true identity, the Otherworldly Demon scratched his head in confusion.

"What am I doing? How are you going to leave if I don't release your shackles?"

Naturally, the Otherworldly Demon was Zhang Xuan in disguise.

When he heard someone calling his name before entering, he couldn't help but feel a little perplexed. Thus, he pushed open the door to take a look, and when he realized that the one who was speaking was Lu Feng, he immediately realized what had happened.

The other party must have recognized him and was currently explaining things to the others in his stead.

Why else would they have said his name in such a desperate situation?

Even though he was perplexed as to how Lu Feng was able to recognize him, this did work in his favor. There was no time for him to explain, and he had no idea how to do so either!

"Leave? What do you mean?"

"If you wish to kill us, so be it! Don't even think that we will be so foolish as to fall for your ploy!"

"Scram, the likes of you aren't worthy of touching our shackles!"

"We came to the Subterranean Gallery knowing that death will eventually befall us. Don't even think that you can win us over with such cheap ploys!"

Seeing that the Otherworldly Demon was attempting to set them free, the group harrumphed coldly.

Incongruous actions could only mean that treacherous intentions were hidden beneath the exterior. Just from the shameless face the other party had, they were certain that he wasn't a good person.

To try to buy them over with such trivial acts, wasn't the other party looking down on the dignity of master teachers a little too much?

Facing the looks of disbelief of the group before him, treating him as if he was a villain, Zhang Xuan exclaimed anxiously, "I am here to save you!"

Weren't you speaking up for me a moment ago? Why are all of you snubbing me now?

"Save us? An Otherworldly Demon King like you would be so kind as to save us?"

"To intend to win our hearts over using such a cheap ploy, aren't you making light of us?"

The master teachers sneered coldly.

"I..."

Not expecting to be misunderstood in such a manner, Zhang Xuan shook his head bitterly before turning to School Head Lu Feng. "School Head Lu, even if they don't they believe me, surely you trust me, right?"

As he spoke, his body jolted as his muscles began contracting with creaking sounds, reverting back to its original look.

"I am Zhang Xuan."

"Zhang Xuan?"

Lu Feng was stunned for a moment before his eyes widened in astonishment, and his body stiffened in horror. His shock gradually turned into rage as he roared ferociously, "You... As I expected, you are an Otherworldly Demon King! I shall kill you right now!"

Back then, Zhang Xuan's teacher had offered an extremely rational explanation to the various peculiarities surrounding Zhang Xuan, and this had left Lu Feng feeling extremely regretful that he had nearly prematurely terminated the journey of a talented master teacher. Out of sheer remorse for his deeds, he had chosen to head to this wretched land in hopes of repenting for his sin with his life.

He had thought that this death would cleanse him of his sins, but who would have thought that just as he was on the brink of death, he would see an Otherworldly Demon King morphing into Zhang Xuan's form!

In other words, that fellow had deceived all of the school heads and him!

"You have misunderstood." Zhang Xuan clearly hadn't expected that reverting back to his original form would deepen the misunderstanding the others had of him. Thus, he

hurriedly explained, "I really am not an Otherworldly Demon. I am a master teacher, and I came here specially to save you all."

Peng!

But before he could finish his words, he suddenly felt a powerful force blasting toward him. Turning around, he saw an elder sending a kick toward his back.

With a nimble side step, Zhang Xuan dodged the attack as his face darkened in displeasure. "What are you doing?"

He had come here to save them out of goodwill, yet they had actually attempted to assault him from behind. They were getting overboard.

It was fortunate that they were severely injured and their cultivation had been sealed, or else even Zhang Xuan would have had a tough time dealing with an abrupt assault from a Saint realm 1-dan pinnacle expert.

"I have long heard that the Otherworldly Demon Kings are able to disguise themselves as humans perfectly, such that even master teachers are unable to tell them apart. However, I truly never expected for one to actually successfully sneak into the Master Teacher Academy and even become its principal!" one of the elders roared furiously.

"Now that I know the truth, I will bring you down today even at the expense of my old life!"

"We must kill him by all cost..."

"As the principal of the Master Teacher Academy, he has access to countless secrets of mankind. If he reports them back to the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, mankind will be in peril."

...

The many master teachers stood up and surrounded Zhang Xuan. Their eyes were crimson with rage, and if looks could kill, the man before them would have been torn to shreds that very instant.

It had just been a moment earlier that they had wondered if that Zhang Xuan was an Otherworldly Demon King, and the very next moment, a huge Otherworldly Demon

morphed into the latter's form.

The truth couldn't have been any clearer to them at that very moment!

It was one thing for an Otherworldly Demon to have infiltrated the Master Teacher Academy, but to become its principal on top of that... Who knew how many secrets of mankind he had leaked out to the Otherworldly Demons already? As master teachers, they would never be able to forgive themselves if he was allowed to do as he pleased.

Lu Feng was also on the verge of erupting in anger.

He had thought that Zhang Xuan, as the disciple of Yang Xuan, a Celestial Master Teacher, couldn't possibly be an Otherworldly Demon, but having seen the Otherworldly Demons obey his words and him morphing from an Otherworldly Demon into a human...

To think that they, master teachers, would be made fools of by the Otherworldly Demons. Frustrated and furious, he clenched his fists tightly as his teeth creaked under the immense pressure of his clenched jaw.

How he hated the fact that he hadn't been more forceful in exposing the other party's identity back then! If only that had been the case, perhaps they wouldn't have found themselves in such a disastrous situation.

"You misunderstand; I am human!" Noticing the rage boiling amid the crowd, as if they were going to devour him whole, Zhang Xuan hurriedly flicked his wrist, and the Byzantium Helios Beast swiftly appeared before him.

"You should recognize him, right? This is the righteous tamed beast of the old principal, the Byzantium Helios Beast. There is no way he could possibly submit to an Otherworldly Demon..."

But before Zhang Xuan could finish his words, Lu Feng abruptly stood up and roared, "Everyone, don't listen to him! It's due to this that I erroneously trusted him, thus bringing crisis upon the Master Teacher Academy. You must be daydreaming if you think that the same tricks will work on me once more!"

Another two more master teachers stood up.

"Indeed, we can't trust his words. I saw with my own eyes how he commanded the

Otherworldly Demons previously!"

"On top of that, the killing intent he exuded was condensed and powerful; at the very least, he must be a King among the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe! Furthermore, I clearly heard with my own ears that the other Otherworldly Demons called him Goldenleaf King!"

Facing the master teachers who were completely convinced with their judgement, Zhang Xuan's complexion turned incredibly ugly.

Had their cultivation not been sealed, they would have surely pounced forward to kill him on the spot.

What the heck was this?

He had gone there to save them, and it was one thing for the other party to doubt his kind intentions, but to be misunderstood as an Otherworldly Demon on top of that...

If they didn't believe him, there was no way he would be able to lead them to safety even if he were to free their shackles!

The situation was truly getting out of hand.

On top of that, it isn't safe for me to reveal my identity as a Celestial Master Teacher here. Zhang Xuan felt frenzied.

There were simply far too many Otherworldly Demons in the area, and they had each reached Saint realm. If he were to attempt to reveal his identity as a Celestial Master Teacher, there was no doubt that it would catch their attention. If so, not only would he be unable to save the master teachers, he could very well die there as well.

It was to conceal this news from the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe that he had chosen to keep it hidden as long as possible. Once news spread, endless trouble and assassinations would surely come his way. By then, not only him, but the safety of those around him would be at stake as well!

However, if he didn't reveal this identity, it would be nigh impossible for him to reverse the prejudice these master teachers had of him and convince them to leave with him!

Incredibly vexed, Zhang Xuan turned to Lu Feng and urged with a nearly pleading tone,

"Lu Feng, I am really a master teacher. I have come here to save you."

"I know that you are master teacher, but I also know that you are an Otherworldly Demon King!" Lu Feng sneered coldly. "Trying to deceive me once more? Dream on!"

"I..."

Seeing the sharp hostility in the other party's eyes, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but feel frenzied.

Why did it seem like the situation was getting worse with his explanation?

With these master teachers antagonistic against him, what was he to do?

...

While Zhang Xuan was at a loss as to how he should clarify the situation, in the main hall where Tong Yue was seated in, a silhouette flashed across the room. The Otherworldly Demon that had left a while ago had returned hurriedly.

"Leader... Our King has arrived!"

"King? What King?" Tong Yue was taken aback by the abrupt news.

"His Highness, Greenleaf King!" the Otherworldly Demon swiftly replied.

"Greenleaf King? His Highness has arrived?" Tong Yue was astonished.

They were subordinates of the Greenleaf King, and the reason they had captured those master teachers was to offer them as tributes to breach the seal so that their King could come over. Who could have known their King would have already come over even though they hadn't done anything yet?

"That's right!" The Otherworldly Demon nodded.

"Hurry up and bring me to him! I have to welcome him." Not daring to hesitate in the slightest, Tong Yue quickly made his way out.

Just as he arrived at the door, he saw the Greenleaf King walking in with another middle-aged man, chatting with smiles on their faces.

Stepping forward, he kneeled onto the ground and bowed deeply. "Tong Yue pays respect to Your Highness!"

The Greenleaf King smiled in satisfaction. "Un, well done. This base is indeed big enough to house an army of a hundred thousand!"

The Greenleaf King boasted a physique even larger than Tong Yue, and his face was pale and devoid of any facial hair. There was an air of valiance between his brows, which granted him an authoritative aura, reminiscent of a person who held great power.

The killing intent that emanated from his body felt so concentrated that it seemed almost tangible. Just a look at him, and one would suddenly feel as if one had descended upon a harsh battlefield with death lingering just around the corner.

"Your Highness, I am honored by your compliments!" Heaving a sigh of relief, Tong Yue thanked him before discreetly turning his gaze to the middle-aged man beside the Greenleaf King.

The other party's physique was slightly shorter and smaller than his King's, but there was an air of coldness around him that left one shivering.

The middle-aged man surveyed the surroundings for a moment before remarking nonchalantly, "This base is indeed well-built, and it is located in close proximity to the seal. However, the mountains in the surroundings make it easy for enemy soldiers to conceal themselves in the area, and that will place us in a dangerous position!"

"This..." Unsure of the other party's identity, Tong Yue had no idea what to make of the other party's remarks, so he turned a doubtful gaze to the Greenleaf King to seek his opinion.

"Yin Shou is an expert on this field, so worry not and heed his words!" the Greenleaf King said.

"Yes!" Tong Yue turned to the middle-aged man, clasped his fist, and bowed deeply. "Lord, may I know what kind of changes should be made?"

"Simple. You just have to move these mountains away. The area within a hundred li radius of our camp should be completely flat so that we will have an unhindered view of the surroundings," the middle-aged man said.

"Move these mountains away?" Tong Yue's mouth twitched.

The mountains within the Subterranean Gallery weren't too tall, but they extended far into the distance. Even with everyone on the job, it would be an arduous task, requiring at least a month or two at the very minimum.

"Send someone to do it and accomplish it as soon as possible!"

Noting the expression on Tong Yue's face, the Greenleaf King chuckled. "Right, I forgot to introduce to you. Brother Yin possesses great fame, so you must have heard of him before as well. He is a member of our Ten Kings of Qingtian...

"...the Goldenleaf King!"

Chapter 951

The Real and the Fake Goldenleaf King (1)

Tong Yue was stunned for a moment before astonishment swept across his face. "Golden... leaf... King?"

It was just a moment ago that one Goldenleaf King had arrived, so how could another one pop up all of a sudden?

Was there more than one Goldenleaf King? That didn't seem likely.

"Aren't you going to pay respects to the Goldenleaf King? It has only been a short while; have you already forgotten your manners?" Seeing how his subordinate was staring intently at the Goldenleaf King with a shocked expression on his face, not showing the slightest politeness at all, the Greenleaf King frowned in displeasure.

"M-my apologies, Your Highness! I was so shocked for a moment that I lost myself." Tong Yue hurriedly fell to the ground and kowtowed.

"Shocked?" The Greenleaf King was perplexed.

Tong Yue might not have been the strongest of his subordinates, but he possessed exceptional capability in getting work done. Otherwise, he wouldn't have dispatched the other party and entrusted him with the important responsibility of laying down the groundwork for their great army. For him to be so shocked as to even forget his bearings for a moment, just what could have happened?

"I-it's... Just a moment ago, a powerful tribesman arrived, and he claimed to be the Goldenleaf King. As such, when I heard that this lord over here is the Goldenleaf King as well, I lost myself for a moment," Tong Yue quickly explained.

"Claimed to be the Goldenleaf King?" The Greenleaf King and Goldenleaf King glanced at one another and froze.

The Goldenleaf King's face darkened, and he took a step forward. "What do you mean? Are you saying that someone tried to impersonate me?"

"This..." Tong Yue wasn't sure how he should respond.

The Greenleaf King gazed at Tong Yue and demanded authoritatively, "What is going on?"

"Reporting to Your Highness, the matter goes like this. Just a moment ago, when my men were in the midst of rounding up a group of master teachers, a tribesman appeared and claimed that he is the Goldenleaf King. Currently, he is still in the opposite hall, interrogating those master teachers!" Tong Yue swiftly explained the matter anxiously.

"Claimed that he is the Goldenleaf King?"

"Interrogating those master teachers?"

The two Kings frowned doubtfully.

"Take us there. I would like to see the person who dares to impersonate me!" With a livid expression, killing intent began seething from the Goldenleaf King, ready to explode at any moment.

To think that someone would be so brazen as to impersonate as him, an Otherworldly Demon King... Unforgivable!

Tong Yue shot a discreet glance toward the Greenleaf King, and it was only upon seeing the latter's nod that he began to lead the way. "Kings, this way please!"

Barely after taking two steps, the Greenleaf King suddenly stopped and instructed, "Wait a moment, there is no need to rush into it. Tong Yue, have your men seal the surroundings first. Make sure to do it discreetly so as to not alarm whoever is inside. We can head in after that is done."

"Yes, Your Highness!" Tong Yue nodded.

If what Tong Yue had said was real, it was very likely that the impersonator would have malicious intentions in mind. Naturally, they would have to apprehend him for interrogation so as to learn his aims.

Tong Yue quickly took his leave before issuing several instructions to his men. Following which, the two hundred Otherworldly Demons from before swiftly moved

out and encircled the hall that Zhang Xuan was in discreetly.

The movements of these Otherworldly Demons were structured and orderly, sealing every single blind spot as they got into position. Putting aside Zhang Xuan, it would be nigh impossible for even a Saint realm 3-dan expert to escape from their encirclement.

"Alright, let's go take a look!" Seeing that the preparations were ready, the Greenleaf King waved his hand, and the group swiftly made their way over to the hall.

...

Seeing that none of the master teachers were willing to trust even a single word of his, Zhang Xuan waved his hand helplessly. "You might not trust me, but give this some thought. If I truly was an Otherworldly Demon King, would I waste my breath with you all here? I would have just dispatched my men to have all of you killed!"

"You must be trying to obtain some crucial intelligence from us. You are trying to numb us with expressing goodwill!" a master teacher spat through gritted teeth.

"Obtain crucial intelligence for you all?" Zhang Xuan shook his head in frustration. "I am the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, do you think that your standing can possibly be higher than mine? Do you actually think that I will need to pry words out of your mouth to obtain crucial intelligence? Just think about it!"

"This..."

Everyone was stunned as there was some logic to Zhang Xuan's words.

However, at that moment, Lu Feng roared, "Don't fall for his eloquence! Even as the esteemed principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, it is impossible for him to know everything! He must have captured us to learn about the secrets regarding the Subterranean Gallery."

Once bitten, twice shy. He had suffered greatly due to the lies of the fellow before him once, and he would never allow history to repeat itself.

"I concur; we shouldn't trust him! Those who aren't our kind will eventually turn against us! If he isn't an Otherworldly Demon, why would he appear before us with such coincidental timing? How could he possibly have so many Otherworldly Demons obey his orders?"

"The Otherworldly Demons are devious. He is bound to be up to something with this abrupt show of goodwill. We mustn't fall for his trap!"

A few other master teachers roared indignantly.

"You all..." Zhang Xuan's eyes flew around the place.

He had come here to save them only to end up pleading to save them, and even at the end of it, they still refused to budge. The world was truly unbelievable.

Unable to hold back his wrath anymore, Zhang Xuan snapped furiously, "Up to something... A bunch of frail elderlies, do you really think that you, who already have a foot in the grave, have anything I need?"

The ages of these men added together amounted to several dozen thousand years. What could Zhang Xuan possibly hope to gain out of them?

"We..." A master teacher was just about to refute Zhang Xuan's words when the Byzantium Helios Beast's face suddenly darkened. "Master, bad news. We have been encircled..."

Having reached Spiritual Perception realm, it was far more sensitive of its surroundings than anyone else in the hall. The movements outside was slight, but the Byzantium Helios Beast was still able to feel it vividly.

"Encircled?"

Taken aback, Zhang Xuan quickly activated his Eye of Insight and looked out of the window. amid the endless darkness, he could see many Otherworldly Demons positioned around the hall, sealing all possible routes of escape. Even though each of them had concealed their aura well, there was no doubt that the army would collapse upon anyone who attempted to escape.

What is going on? Zhang Xuan's heart turned cold at that sight.

Hadn't he convinced them that he was the Goldenleaf King just a moment ago?

Why would they suddenly go so far as to encircle the surroundings, as if preparing to kill him?

Zhang Xuan swiftly turned to the Byzantium Helios Beast and said, "You should return for now."

With a glance, he could already tell that it was impossible to break through the other party's defenses and escape.

"Yes!" The Byzantium Helios Beast nodded before returning to the Myriad Anthive Nest.

After stowing away the Myriad Anthive Nest, Zhang Xuan began warping his physique once more to return back to the form of an Otherworldly Demon.

Shortly after he was done, the doors to the hall opened from the outside, 'jiya', and three men walked in with wide strides.

The one leading the way was Tong Yue, and the other two trailing behind looked rather unfamiliar. However, the energy coursing through their bodies felt powerful and relentless, creating a huge pressure on those facing them.

Saint realm... 4-dan experts? Zhang Xuan's face twitched as the hands hidden beneath his sleeves clenched tightly into fists.

He had never expected to encounter a Saint realm 4-dan expert there.

He had been thinking that even in the worst of situation, he would still be able to forge a bloody path out with the army he had. But with the emergence of experts of such caliber, this plan had become infeasible.

Knowing that he was cornered, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but feel anxious within. Nevertheless, he knew that it was precisely in such situations that he had to maintain his composure and rationality. Driving his Soul Depth, he gradually regained himself.

"Tong Yue, didn't I tell you not to have anyone disturb me? Do you really think that I dare not kill you?" With a livid face, Zhang Xuan glared at Tong Yue with killing intent tinged in his words.

He had no idea where he had erred for the other party to have seen through his disguise, but he could only follow through at this point. Otherwise, he could very well be killed on the spot.

If only that bunch of dim-witted master teachers had been able to think rationally and do as he had said, they could have very well been out by now! Such a crisis wouldn't have occurred either.

"It is not that I wish to disturb you, but... our King and the Goldenleaf King has arrived, and upon hearing that you claimed to be the Goldenleaf King as well, they instructed me to bring them here to meet you," Tong Yue replied.

Your King? Goldenleaf King? Zhang Xuan suddenly felt the world spin around him and he nearly keeled over.

Surely, I couldn't have been so unlucky, could I?

I was only going to make use of the name for a brief moment, but the owner of the name just had to appear with such unholy timing. Did I offend the God of Fortune somehow?

The previous time I feigned as the special envoy of the Poison Hall, the real special envoy also arrived shortly after I began, nearly causing my ship to capsize 1. I thought that luck would return to me after that unfortunate event, but it seems like it has only gotten worse. This time, while I am pretending to be the Goldenleaf King, not only did the man himself appear, even the Greenleaf King came along with him as well...

How could my luck be so poor at such a crucial moment?

At this point, the Goldenleaf King stepped forward and bellowed with a livid face, "Who are you? Why are you making use of my name?"

"Who are you?" Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up as he returned the question.

With no other plausible way out, he could only make this gamble.

"I am the Goldenleaf King!" the Goldenleaf King replied furiously.

"Audacious! Where the hell did you find the guts to impersonate me? Tong Yue, what are you waiting for? Take that man down!" Zhang Xuan bellowed furiously with a majestic wave of his hand. After which, he gracefully placed his hands behind his back and emanated a powerful aura, which hinted at incomparable strength. "I am the Goldenleaf King!"

After uttering those words, he warped his muscles to assume an appearance identical to the Goldenleaf King opposite to him.

His previous appearance was modelled after his puppet. Since the real Goldenleaf King had arrived, it went without saying that he should adopt the same appearance as the other party.

"You!" Seeing that the other party was not only making use of his name but had even morphed into his appearance right before his eyes, the Goldenleaf King felt so furious that he could explode.

Can you be any faker?

To morph into my appearance before everyone's eyes, are you seriously taking everyone here to be blind?

On the other hand, after changing into the Goldenleaf King's appearance, Zhang Xuan said haughtily, "This is my original appearance. I only morphed my appearance because I didn't want to show my true face to others!"

Seeing how the other party was so brazen as to fearlessly pose as the Goldenleaf King before the both of them, the Greenleaf King finally came to the end of his patience and snapped, "Who in the world are you? I have travelled through the seal along with the Goldenleaf King, so there is no mistake about his identity!"

Naturally, he trusted the Goldenleaf King, who had travelled through the seal with him, more than a stranger who had seemingly come out of nowhere.

"No mistake about his identity?" Zhang Xuan waved his hands in frustration and sighed deeply. With a look of pity, he said, "Greenleaf King, you are too naive! You should have taken a closer look at that fellow beside you before putting your trust in him. You might not know who the fellow beside you is, but I do! He once impersonated me in the past, and I taught him a lesson after I found out about it, but that cunning beast managed to slip away. I truly couldn't have thought that he would get to you. If only I knew, I would have killed him back then when I had the chance!"

"What did you say?" Hearing the story get more and more preposterous, the Goldenleaf King felt so furious that killing intent seethed within his veins.

It was one thing for that fellow to impersonate him, but to shamelessly claim that he

was the real one before him... Just where did the other party find his guts?

Furthermore, I impersonated you? And you taught me a lesson?

How can you lie through your teeth without your face reddening in the slightest?

Where is your sense of shame?

"Don't you know very well what I am saying?"

Shaking his head with a deeply disappointed expression, Zhang Xuan bellowed wrathfully, "You beast, how could you betray my trust in you? I treated you like my own son, imparting my cultivation techniques and battle techniques to you just so that you could grow to become a decent demon. Yet, taking advantage of your deep knowledge of me and my techniques, you disguised as me and went around swindling others. You ingrate, show your true form!"

After which, Zhang Xuan turned to Tong Yue and the Greenleaf King and sighed deeply. "To tell you the truth, he is actually a tamed beast that I raised. In our years together, he learned all of my habits and skills, which allowed him to pass himself off as me."

"Tamed beast?" The Greenleaf King and Tong Yue were taken aback.

The latter couldn't help but ask, "Tamed beast? But our Otherworldly Demonic Tribe doesn't have any spirit beasts or saint beasts."

Chapter 952

The Real and the Fake Goldenleaf King (2)

"No spirit beasts or saint beasts?" Zhang Xuan nearly spurted blood.

It wasn't easy for him to fabricate a passable story for this bizarre turn of events, and he was banking on it to convince the others that he was the real one. Upon hearing those words, he nearly burst into tears on the spot.

The Otherworldly Demonic Tribe has no spirit beast or saint beast?

What the heck is with that?

Just what is with my luck today?

"That is not important!" Despite feeling so stifled that his heart could explode, he didn't allow any of that to show on his face. Waving his hands nonchalantly, he explained, "When I said tamed beast, what I am referring to is a junior who I have raised from young. I have always treated him like a close pet of mine, and over the years, I have put in much effort and many resources to groom him. Just that, who could have known that he would be such an ingrate, impersonating me and committing atrocities in my name? I have truly kicked myself in my foot this time around!"

"You are spouting nonsense!" the Goldenleaf King roared indignantly.

You are the one who is a pet; your whole family are pets!

Hong long!

The Goldenleaf King roared furiously as he raised his hand. An immense might, which covered the entire skyline, burst forth from his palm, heading straight toward Zhang Xuan.

He was truly pissed off this time around.

He thought that he would be able to scare the impersonator silly by confronting the

other party head-on, but who could have known that... that fellow would actually prattle on and on excitedly, to the point that he even became the other party's pet.

This was truly his first time seeing someone as shameless as that fellow!

To impersonate another so daringly before the person in question... this was truly an eye-opener for him!

Sss la!

That powerful strike devastated even space itself, twisting and contorting it as if a piece of flimsy fabric.

"How powerful..."

"We are done for..."

Upon seeing this strike, the many 6-star master teachers behind Zhang Xuan went pale with fear.

As esteemed 6-star master teachers of the Master Teacher Continent, they were confident in their ability, thinking that they were at least on par with the Otherworldly Demons. However, after witnessing the might exerted by the Goldenleaf King, they couldn't help but feel a deep, instinctive fear that permeated their souls.

There was a difference in their strength, one that was so huge that there was no basis for comparison.

If the strike were to land on them, they would surely die instantaneously. Not even the deities would be able to bring them back to life.

"Hah, the dogs are biting one another? Good!"

"Kill that fellow!"

Two master teachers harrumphed coldly.

However, the attack wasn't directed toward them, and they were more than glad to see the Otherworldly Demons thinning their forces through infighting. It would be the best if they ripped one another apart.

"To dare make a move against me, how dare you!" Not expecting the Goldenleaf King to attack him without any hesitation, Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up. Not bothering to dodge, he lifted his finger and tapped into the sky.

Hu!

The speed of his finger wasn't fast, and it didn't seem to harness much might behind it either. However, a killing intent so powerful that it shook one's heart abruptly burst forth. From the callous killing intent, one could feel the majesty of an Otherworldly Demon King, and it seemed to suppress those who shared the same bloodline.

The Greenleaf King narrowed his eyes in astonishment. "What pure Zhenqi of Slaughter..."

As an Otherworldly Demon, he could clearly sense how powerful the other party's zhenqi was.

The might the other party exerted was beneath that of the Goldenleaf King who first made a move, but to his astonishment, the other party's zhenqi purity was extremely high, even higher than his!

In other words, the other party was of the King Stratum through and through, or even above him at that!

Even if he isn't the Goldenleaf King, there is no doubt that he is another formidable King from somewhere else, the Greenleaf King thought.

Otherworldly Demons were ranked according to the purity of their Zhenqi of Slaughter. Considering that the fellow before him had zhenqi even purer than him, the other party was definitely a King as well. Even if he wasn't the Goldenleaf King, his standing was surely not beneath theirs in any way.

But... why would a person of such standing impersonate the Goldenleaf King? Was there any need for him to do so?

Hu!

While the Greenleaf King was musing over the doubts in his mind, Zhang Xuan's finger collided with the Goldenleaf King's palm strike. In that very instant, a flash of light burst from his fingertip and formed a barrier.

Formed of countless wills, the barrier of light was nigh indestructible, allowing it to neutralize the impact of the Goldenleaf King's palm strike perfectly. Following which, the finger came into contact with the barrier, and astonishingly, the might harnessed in the finger was transmitted through barrier.

Peng!

Under the powerful impact, the Goldenleaf King's face reddened as he was forced back several steps.

It was direct clash of might, and he had even held the upper hand from being the first to strike. Yet, the other party had easily neutralized his attack and even successfully launched a counterattack against him. In other words, the other party was even stronger than him!

Where did this freak come from?

"What a close shave!"

In contrast with the Goldenleaf King's astonishment, Zhang Xuan discreetly heaved a sigh of relief within.

Possessing only the cultivation of a Half-Saint, there was no way he could stand against the might of a Saint realm 4-dan expert under normal circumstances.

In that critical moment, he swiftly activated the Principal's Seal.

As an artifact made out of the wills of countless teachers and students of the Master Teacher Academy, the absolute defense formed by the Principal's Seal was difficult for even a Saint realm 4-dan expert to breach.

After neutralizing the attack, he swiftly made use of Vicious' finger to counterattack.

Vicious was still a long way off from recovering to his peak, but in a direct confrontation, he was still able to hold his ground against a Saint realm 4-dan expert. However, it would be unsafe to use him too much. Once or twice, he could still feign it as his own attack. Too many times, and the other party could potentially realize that he was tapping into an external force.

After knocking the other party back, Zhang Xuan bellowed angrily, "It is out of our past

relationship that I have spared you for so long. Are you really intending on killing your own master?"

If the battle were to continue, he would surely lose. In such circumstances, there was only one thing he could do—scare the other party out of his wits first!

"Who the hell are you?" After trading a blow and knowing that the other party possessed strength on par with him, the Goldenleaf King knew that there was a chance he could lose if a fight were to occur between the both of them. Thus, he decided to talk it out first before deciding on the next course of action.

"Like I said, I am the Goldenleaf King!" Harrumphing coldly, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze to the Greenleaf King and said, "It is pointless for us to continue arguing like this, we won't get anywhere. Why don't you be the judge and determine which of us is the real one?"

"Me?" The Greenleaf King was taken aback.

Like I just said earlier, you are the fake, and the one beside me is the real one. What else do you want me to judge?

"Indeed. The real Goldenleaf King should have a deep understanding of his own cultivation flaws, right?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"That... of course!" The Greenleaf King nodded.

Each cultivator would keep their cultivation flaws a secret, telling no one about it for obvious reasons. If one of them could logically point out the flaws in the Goldenleaf King's cultivation, that would only go to say that he was the real Goldenleaf King.

Even though the Greenleaf King was only an outsider and didn't have a thorough understanding of the Goldenleaf King's cultivation, it wasn't an issue for him to determine whether the flaws listed were correct or not based on his deep understanding of cultivation.

Seeing through the Greenleaf King's thoughts, Zhang Xuan said, "What I am proposing is simple. That fellow and I will tell you the flaws in our cultivation, and you will be the judge to determine which of us is the Goldenleaf King. Naturally, the one who is more precise and accurate can only be the real Goldenleaf King!"

"You wish to list out the flaws in your cultivation?" The Greenleaf King hesitantly turned to the Goldenleaf King. "Brother Yin..."

The Goldenleaf King harrumphed. "Don't listen to his nonsense! I have cultivated my 'Grand Lunar Art' to its very limits; there is no way there are any flaws with it!"

"There is no way there are any flaws? What arrogant words! I did point out the various problems in cultivating the Grand Lunar Art to you back then, but I didn't point out the most fundamental issues with it, so it's only natural that you are unaware of it! If you dare not compete with me, that can only mean that you are the fake. Greenleaf King, as you can see, the truth can't be any clearer. Have that imposter beside you apprehended!" Zhang Xuan waved his hand.

"Me, a fake?" The Goldenleaf King's face darkened. "Preposterous!"

"If you aren't a fake, why do you fear such a simple challenge? Of course, it goes without saying that the fake can't possibly know more than the original, so it is natural that you fear me," Zhang Xuan said.

"This..." The Goldenleaf King hesitated.

If it was anyone else, he would have charged forward and had the other party killed. However, from the previous blow they had traded, he could tell that the other party possessed extraordinary strength. Even if he were to use his full might, he might not necessarily be a match for the other party.

If things went badly, he might even be severely injured.

The most important issue at hand was to find out who the other party was and why the other party needed to impersonate him.

After a moment of hesitation, the Goldenleaf King roared, "Fine, I will accept your challenge. If you lose, you had better spit out your true identity obediently."

The cultivation technique that he cultivated, as well as the flaws concerning it, were among the greatest secrets that he kept. He had never told anyone before, so he didn't believe that an impersonator could possibly know more than him.

"I should be the one saying those words to you. Alright, let's begin. We will do it by sending a telepathic message to the Greenleaf King. You can start first." Chuckling

softly, Zhang Xuan gestured for the Goldenleaf King to go first.

He might not be too confident about the other things, but in the field of identifying flaws, he was definitely supreme!

There was no way that the other party could know more than him.

"Alright!" The Goldenleaf King harrumphed coldly before sending a telepathic message to the Greenleaf King. "That fellow is a little weird. My cultivation technique does have some flaws, but there aren't too many of them. I will tell you some of them. Later on, listen carefully to what that fellow says and repeat it all to me. I want to know what he can come up with."

After saying that, the Goldenleaf King began to point out the various flaws concerning his cultivation.

There was no cultivator who didn't have any flaws in their cultivation.

The ones that the Goldenleaf King pointed out were the flaws commonly found in cultivation techniques. It was nothing much even if others were to learn of them.

After all, one's flaws were often where one's mingmen lay. There was no way a cultivator could allow another to learn of it.

The reason he agreed to the challenge was to hear what the other fellow had to say. If the other party had a tight grasp over his flaws as well, that would be truly scary!

"Un." After hearing the Goldenleaf King's piece, the Greenleaf King nodded before turning to Zhang Xuan. "It's your turn."

"Alright!" Even though Zhang Xuan had no idea what the other two had spoken about, he could tell that they were up to something from a momentary gaze they had shared. Nevertheless, he chose not to expose that and began sending a telepathic message to the Greenleaf King with a faint smile on his lips.

"The cultivation technique I cultivate is the 'Grand Lunar Art', and it has been 1731 since I started learning it. So far, I have reached the 4-dan of the technique, and there is a total of seven major flaws with it.

"Firstly, this cultivation technique intensifies one's killing intent, making one more

prone to violent outbursts. This is also the reason I often kill others in a moment of recklessness...

"Secondly...

"Thirdly..."

...

Zhang Xuan swiftly went through the flaws of the Grand Lunar Art.

The flaws that he listed were detailed, but just like the Goldenleaf King, he didn't reveal anything vital that could compromise his safety.

In other words, even if the Greenleaf King were to be aware of these flaws, he would still be unable to exploit them to get the better of him.

As Zhang Xuan spoke, the Greenleaf King couldn't help but widen his eyes in shock and disbelief.

The words of the other party were similar to what the Goldenleaf King had told him previously, and it was even more detailed than the latter. It contained some details that made perfect sense with the cultivation technique if one were to analyze it as a whole.

Could it be that... that fellow is the real Goldenleaf King? Doubts sprouted within the Greenleaf King's mind.

If the other party wasn't the Goldenleaf King, how could he have such a detailed understanding of the Grand Lunar Art's flaws.

After all, cultivating was an individual activity, and one wouldn't even share the details regarding it with one's closest friends or even one's spouse. Considering how the other party was able to speak of it so fluently without making any mistakes, it was truly hard to believe that he wasn't the Goldenleaf King.

"Alright, this is all I have to say. You have heard us both out, so I believe that you should be able to easily tell which of us is the real Goldenleaf King." Zhang Xuan smiled calmly.

"This..." the Greenleaf King hesitantly turned his gaze toward the Goldenleaf King

beside him, only to hear the latter sending a telepathic message to him anxiously.

"What did that fellow say?"

"He said..." The Greenleaf King hesitated for a moment, but he still eventually chose to tell the Goldenleaf King everything that he had heard from Zhang Xuan.

Hearing those words, the face of the Goldenleaf King paled, and his body stiffened. He turned to look at Zhang Xuan with a horrified expression. "Who the hell are you? How do you know so much about me?"

Chapter 953

The Real and the Fake Goldenleaf King (3)

It was no wonder the Goldenleaf King felt frenzied.

The words that the Greenleaf King had just told him made him feel as if someone had patted him down head to toe, to the point that even the color of his underwear wasn't a secret anymore.

For a person he had never met before to know so much about him... To make things worse, he didn't even know who the other party was! The immense fear he felt from this perplexing situation left him feeling incredibly frenzied.

"Who am I? I am the Goldenleaf King!" Zhang Xuan flung his sleeves in rage and bellowed. "Just stop that pointless struggle and come clean. Why are you impersonating me?"

"Impersonating you? Damn you!" The Goldenleaf King's breathing hastened.

"Greenleaf King, like you have seen, my version is far more detailed than his."

Paying no heed to the Goldenleaf King, Zhang Xuan turned his attention to the Greenleaf King and said grimly, "However, there is no point pursuing this matter. At this rate, we will just become laughingstock before this bunch of master teachers! Why don't we just do it this way then? I still have some business with them that isn't convenient for the rest of you to learn about, so allow me to finish interrogating them privately first. If you still harbor some reservations toward me, you can seal the area completely so that no one will be able to escape. This mission was entrusted to me by the superiors, and it concerns a great secret of our race. It must be accomplished regardless of the cost!"

Zhang Xuan's goal wasn't really to convince the others that he was the Goldenleaf King.

It was infeasible to do so. After all, the real Goldenleaf King was standing opposite him.

What he was aiming to do was stall for time instead. As long as he could confuse them

sufficiently to buy some time alone with the master teachers, that would suffice.

"You want to interrogate them privately?" The Greenleaf King frowned.

"Rest assured, there are so many people stationed outside. There is no way they will be able to escape. After I am done with my interrogation, I will come out to match testimonies with you once more so as to prove my true identity!" Zhang Xuan waved his hand casually.

"What is it that you wish to question them about? Why can't we remain here to listen in?" the Greenleaf King asked doubtfully.

"Like I said, this concerns a great secret of our race! It is due to the great responsibility I bear that I paid a heavy price to bypass the seal in advance. None of you will be able to bear the responsibility should something go wrong in the mission and affect our great plan!" Zhang Xuan said with a sharp glint in his eyes.

"Don't listen to his nonsense! He is just changing the subject..." the Goldenleaf King argued.

However, before he could finish his words, Zhang Xuan turned around and glared at the Goldenleaf King coldly, as if wanting to rip the fool before him into pieces. "Changing the topic? How dare you! For so many years, our tribesmen have suffered after that darned Kong shi drove us out. It wasn't easy for us to find an opportunity to rise up once more, and you... Let me just ask you this! If something happens, do you think that a mere King like you can face the consequences?"

Under the great pressure from Zhang Xuan's gaze, the Goldenleaf King stuttered, "I-I..."

Back then, after their Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was driven out of the main continent by Kong shi, they had been forced into the sunless and sinister otherworldly battlefield. For many years, their tribesmen had viewed returning to the main continent as their ultimate goal. If he were to really mess up this matter, he wouldn't be able to pay for his sins even if he were to die ten thousand times over!

Just as he was at a loss, the Goldenleaf King suddenly heard a telepathic message from the Greenleaf King. "Brother Yin, do you know who he is?"

In the depths of his heart, the Greenleaf King still trusted the person that he had come

here with.

"I wouldn't be so frustrated if I knew who he is!" the Goldenleaf King cried in exasperation.

After a moment of hesitation, the Greenleaf King said, "Forget it, let's just leave for now. In any case, those in the surroundings are our men, so there is no way he will be able to get away. If, on the off chance, his words are true, that will be an extremely heavy sin for us to bear. We can't afford to take the risk!"

From the beginning to the end, he had never believed that Zhang Xuan was the real Goldenleaf King. However, the fact that the other party had been able to point out the Goldenleaf King's cultivation flaws and the incredibly pure Zhenqi of Slaughter the other party harnessed indicated that the other party was no ordinary figure.

If the other party was an envoy dispatched by their superiors and had a mission at hand to accomplish, they would be in deep trouble if they were to hinder his mission.

"This..."

The Goldenleaf King was in a dilemma.

Doubts filled his mind.

As angry as he was at being impersonated, considering the fact that the other party was able to maintain a fearless attitude before him and have such a deep understanding of him, it was very likely that the other party had some kind of backing.

"Regardless of whether he has impersonated you or you have impersonated him, that is a matter we can resolve internally. As long as we have sufficient time on hand, it will be easy for us to resolve the issue. If it really comes to it, we can have the both of you execute your strongest moves, and through the movements, we should be able to tell who the real one is!" the Greenleaf King said.

"At least for the moment, I think we shouldn't interfere with the other party's mission. This could very well involve directions from the superiors, and we won't be able to bear the consequences if anything goes wrong."

In the eyes of most Otherworldly Demons, they were esteemed Kings who wielded great power. However, they themselves knew that their standing was truly not worth

a mention at all.

Even within the King Stratum, they were among the weakest.

"You are saying that we should leave for the time being?" the Goldenleaf King asked.

"Indeed, I think that we should leave for the time being. Don't you specialize in formations? If you are still worried, you can set up a formation around the area so that they won't be able to escape. Once he is done with his interrogation, we can continue to decide how to deal with the matter. Don't worry, you came over with me, and I trust you more than that fellow!" the Greenleaf King said.

The Goldenleaf King hesitated for a brief moment before nodding. "Alright then."

What the Greenleaf King said made sense. In terms of zhenqi purity and strength, the other party was on par with or even superior to him. If they were to fall out and battle here, there was a good chance that they would end up harming the Otherworldly Demons in the area and destroy the base they had built painstakingly, thus affecting their great plan.

The superiors had paid an astronomical price for them to bypass the barrier. If they were to screw it all up over a minor matter like that, they would become the sinners of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe!

As the saying goes, a lack of forbearance for the trivial can foil the greater scheme.

The Otherworldly Demonic Tribe had waited far too long for this opportunity. They could not allow it to fail because of him.

Upon seeing that he had the Goldenleaf King's approval, the Greenleaf King heaved a sigh of relief. Turning toward Zhang Xuan, he clasped his fist and said, "Since you are going to interrogate them, we will wait for you outside. Pardon us, but we can only give you an hour at most."

"Un, that's fine." Nodding, Zhang Xuan turned around and waved his hands, indicating for them to leave.

The Greenleaf King and Goldenleaf King glanced at one another before making their way out. However, before they could get far, they suddenly heard the voice of an indignant master teacher from within the hall.

"Didn't you say that you are principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, Zhang Xuan, in disguise and that you are going to set us free? When did you become the Goldenleaf King?"

The one who spoke was Lu Feng.

That fellow had a deep-rooted notion that Zhang Xuan was an Otherworldly Demon. Knowing that it was impossible for him to kill the latter himself, he wished to make use of this opportunity to create a rift between the Otherworldly Demons so that they could destroy one another!

You... Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan nearly spurted blood and fainted.

It hadn't been easy for him to dispel the doubts in the minds of those few, and success was just around the corner. Yet, that fool had suddenly dumped this farce on him. Are you that intent to see me dead?

As the previous head of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy Apothecary School, how can you be so brainless?

Zhang Xuan felt truly enraged by Lu Feng's foolish actions, but he could still understand the rationale behind why the latter would do so.

It was just a moment ago that he had insisted that he was a master teacher, but in the next moment, he was suddenly trying to convince the others that he was the Goldenleaf King, and he had even produced a relatively convincing argument. In any case, that further convinced Lu Feng that he was indeed an Otherworldly Demon King, and this prompted him to make use of this ideal opportunity to stir internal strife between them.

Zhang Xuan felt so vexed that he could explode, but he knew that this wasn't the time for him to lose his cool. Swiftly turning around, he saw that the Greenleaf King and Goldenleaf King had stopped in their footsteps and directed doubtful gazes his way.

"Principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy? Zhang Xuan?"

"Set them free? What is going on?"

The duo stared at Zhang Xuan with sharp eyes, seemingly trying to peer through his disguise.

"This..."

Zhang Xuan's body stiffened as his brain swiftly whirled into action. A moment later, he chuckled softly and calmly replied, "Indeed, I am the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, Zhang Xuan!"

Chapter 954

Trust Zhang Xuan

"The principal of the Master Teacher Academy?"

Hong long!

Upon hearing that a human, the principal of a Master Teacher Academy at that, had actually snuck into their ranks, disguised as one of their own, the Greenleaf King and Goldenleaf King's faces darkened as a powerful force burst from their bodies. They eyed Zhang Xuan coldly like an eagle staring at its prey, seemingly prepared to make a move at any moment.

From the very start, the other party's identity had been very dubious. If the other party was truly a master teacher, they would have to kill him on the spot.

Ignoring the two who were going to make a move, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze back to Lu Feng and urged anxiously, "Indeed, I am Principal Zhang. Look, they are going to make a move on me, so you can believe me now, right? So, hurry up and tell me that thing! Are you really intending to take the secret to your graves?"

"That thing?" Lu Feng was taken aback.

From the start to the end, the other party had been speaking about how he wanted to rescue them. The other party hadn't said anything about 'that thing'!

"Allow me to introduce to you two!"

Paying no heed to Lu Feng's dumbstruck expression, Zhang Xuan turned to the Greenleaf King and Goldenleaf King and said, "This is the stand-in principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, half 7-star master teacher Lu Feng..."

"Stand-in principal?" The Greenleaf King and the Goldenleaf King glanced at one another and frowned.

"Indeed, I am Lu Feng! Kill me if you want to, but you won't be getting anything out of

my mouth!" Lu Feng stood up and raised his gaze proudly.

"What is a stand-in principal of a Master Teacher Academy doing here?" The two Kings were bewildered.

"Kill you? Why would I kill you? I am here to save you! Didn't I tell you that I am your principal? Trust me!" Zhang Xuan said earnestly.

The Greenleaf King and Goldenleaf King glanced at one another before realization struck them, and they burst into laughter.

"Hahaha! Indeed. I can testify that he is your principal!"

"I can vouch for that, too. We have been doubting his identity from the start, and it seems like we have an answer now..."

They had long heard of the obstinacy of the master teachers; not even death could pry open their lips. Most likely, the other party was trying to impersonate their principal in the hope of winning the other party's trust so as to uncover more of their secrets.

In fact, it was a joke in itself for the other party to be the principal of a Master Teacher Academy.

Would the principal of a Master Teacher Academy have such an appearance? Would the principal of a Master Teacher Academy wield such pure Zhenqi of Slaughter?

What a joke!

Besides, considering the lofty standing of the principal, why would he descend to the Subterranean Gallery and seek death?

More importantly, given that Lu Feng was the stand-in principal, how could he possibly betray his own leader, uttering his name loud for them to hear?

It was apparent that the other party was trying to sow discord among them!

To try to use such poor deception on us? You are still too young, my boy! We are Otherworldly Demon Kings; it is ludicrous that you actually think such small ruses could work on us!

Hearing the words from the two, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief within. "Look, even they have testified in my favor..."

In the previous situation, it would have seemed suspicious no matter how he tried to explain it. Since that was the case, he might as well admit it candidly.

This way, he would confuse them further, forcing them rethink the entire situation and fill in the incongruencies in the story with their rich imagination.

It also happened that Lu Feng's identity was rather sensitive, and that worked in his favor as well. By dropping these hints, it wasn't too difficult for him to lead the other party on in the direction he wanted.

From the looks of it, it was working pretty well.

On the other hand, Lu Feng still had no idea that he had been used, and he bellowed at Zhang Xuan furiously, "Humph, you want me to believe you? Dream on."

"Why are you just so stubborn? I have already proven my identity to you again and again, but you just won't believe it..."

With a bitter sigh, Zhang Xuan glanced at the two Kings and shrugged helplessly.

The Greenleaf King harrumphed with a frown. "In my view, there is no need to go through so much trouble to get close to them. You should just burn them on the rack, and when their skin bursts open from the intense heat, toss them into the ice cavern. Repeat the cycle a few times, and there is no way they will be able to keep their spunk!"

The Goldenleaf King also nodded in agreement. "Indeed. Such knaves should be dealt with severely to make them talk. What backbone or dignity? Those are nothing more than mere words. Just wear them thin for a few days, and I believe that they will spill everything out obediently!"

"Un. If it doesn't work out, I will try your method." Zhang Xuan waved his hand and said, "However, for the time being, I still have other methods to try. You should leave for now."

"Alright!" The Greenleaf King and Goldenleaf King nodded before leaving the area.

Jiya!

The door closed, leaving Zhang Xuan alone with the other master teachers once more.

"Kill us, mince us, do your worst! Just don't expect to get a word out of us!"

"Indeed. We have already lived long enough anyway; the worst that can happen now is death!"

"You must be dreaming if you think that we master teachers will submit to you Otherworldly Demons!"

Hearing that Zhang Xuan was going to interrogate them, the master teachers stiffened their necks proudly.

Master teachers could die, but they couldn't submit to another race!

This was the bottom line in their hearts, as well as the dignity and honor they had lived by.

Seeing their expressions, Zhang Xuan shook his head.

Their attitude was indeed admirable, but he was really there to save them!

After a moment's hesitation, Zhang Xuan sighed deeply and said, "I know that none of you believe me, but you should be well aware that there is only one fate awaiting you if you wait here. You will either die or suffer a fate worse than death. However, if you follow me, I can get you out of here. As for whether I am Zhang Xuan and the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy or not, we can always talk about that once we are safe!"

Seeing the sincerity in the other party's eyes, which contrasted deeply to the savagery reflected in the gazes of Otherworldly Demons, the master teachers glanced at one another doubtfully.

Seeing that the group was starting to waver, Zhang Xuan pushed on. "If I wanted to kill you, do you think that any of you would be able to stop me in your current state? Considering that I am Hongyuan's principal, there is no need for me to interrogate you either. Is there any secret you have that is worth me going through so much trouble for?"

"This..." The crowd fell silent. Even the hostile Lu Feng opened his mouth several times

but didn't utter a word of protest.

The other party was right. If he intended to kill them, there was no need for him to waste his breath on them. If he intended to procure valuable intelligence from them, he would have fared much better torturing them than acting chummy with them. Could the other party really be there to save them?

"Even if you don't believe me, surely you recognize this, right?" Seeing that his words were finally working, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. Flicking his wrist, a token appeared in his hand.

Principal's Seal!

"This is... an Impeccable Principal's Seal? How could that be possible..." Upon seeing the seal, Lu Feng was stunned.

As Hongyuan's previous stand-in principal, he was well-aware of the various tiers of Principal's Seal. The token in the other party's hands was clearly the Impeccable Principal's Seal of legend! It was said that only one who had gained the recognition of all the academy's teachers and students could form it. Due to the impossibility in doing so, it had never appeared in history before.

Yet, for it to appear in Zhang Xuan's hands... How was that possible?

"Impeccable Principal's Seal? What does that mean?"

The other master teachers weren't too sure about the significance of it, so they glanced at one another in confusion.

"It's..." Lu Feng hesitated for a moment before explaining everything to them.

"It is a Principal's Seal that is formed by earning the earnest recognition of every single teacher and student in the Master Teacher Academy?"

"If he possesses the Impeccable Principal's Seal, doesn't that mean that even all of the predecessors trust him? If that's the case, what right do we have to doubt him?"

"Could he have killed the real Principal Zhang Xuan and stolen his token?"

"That's impossible! The Principal's Seal is formed by gathering the wills of the

teachers and students together for the principal. If the principal is killed, the gathered wills will begin to dissipate!"

...

After hearing the explanation, everyone's gazes turned to Zhang Xuan once more. Even though they still harbored some reservations toward him, they weren't that resistant to the notion of following his orders anymore.

"Time is not on our side, so I don't have the luxury to explain everything to you now. If you trust me, follow me and I will bring you out of here!" Seeing that the others didn't have as much hostility toward him anymore, Zhang Xuan nodded inwardly. "We only have one chance. Only by living on can you slay more Otherworldly Demons in the future and protect mankind. Courage and righteousness are good traits, but only under the right circumstances. If you remain here, your blood will only be used as tributes by the Otherworldly Demons to bring even more of their tribesmen over!"

"This..." Hearing those words, everyone's faces froze.

The other party was right. They had also heard that the reason the Otherworldly Demons had spared them thus far was to use them as tributes to bypass the seal so that more powerful Otherworldly Demons would be able to come over to this side.

If they were to remain there, such would be the fate awaiting them. Not only would their sacrifice be in vain, they would have even potentially harmed more humans.

The eldest master teacher of the group asked, "How do you intend to escape? We will listen to your commands!"

"Even if you are lying to us, it will still be much better than remaining here!"

The other master teachers nodded in agreement as well.

"Un, the plan is simple. All I need you to do now is not resist, and I will bring you into a folded space," Zhang Xuan said.

He had already given some thought to how he could escape with the master teachers.

It would clearly be impossible to take them out of the Otherworldly Demon's base discreetly given the security in the area. As such, the only way was to move them into

the Myriad Anthive Nest and find a way to sneak out himself.

"Alright!" The others were surprised when they heard that they had to enter a folded space, but knowing that time was limited, they hurriedly nodded.

This was indeed the best solution they had at hand.

"Alright, come in!"

Flicking his wrist, Zhang Xuan took out the Myriad Anthive Nest before extending his consciousness toward them.

The other master teachers also slackened their mental guard, not resisting Zhang Xuan's pull.

Hu!

With a light buzz, the room of forty or so master teachers vanished, entering the Anthive Nest.

Returning the Myriad Anthive Nest to his storage ring, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

It was indeed frustrating to deal with those obstinate master teachers when they were against him, but ultimately, it was clear that their hearts were aligned with mankind, and the lengths they were willing to go for mankind was worthy of respect. No matter what, he felt that he should save them.

Now... how do I get out?

Having put everything into the Myriad Anthive Nest, all that was left was for Zhang Xuan was to find a way out of this place.

Taking a glance out through the windows, he saw that the two Kings were indeed guarding the area from the outside. On top of that, there were several additional formations set up around the area. Should Zhang Xuan attempt to leave the area abruptly without a valid reason, he could very well find himself lynched the next moment.

I was able to persuade them to leave before through forcefully arguing my way

through, but as soon as they notice that the master teachers are missing, they will surely realize that something is amiss and take me down! Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella in frustration.

There was no way he could explain the disappearance of the master teachers to the two Kings, and there was no way the two Kings would believe him either. The only way he could survive in this situation was to flee discreetly, but... how could he flee given the tight guard placed around the hall?

Eventually, Zhang Xuan came to a decision. Seems like I will have to rely on my means as a soul oracle!

He had weighed his options, and it seemed like the best and possibly only way he could possibly get out of this situation was to flee in his soul form.

Having made up his mind, he sat on the floor and drew his soul out from his glabella without any hesitation.

After which, he stowed his physical body into his storage ring before discreetly carrying his ring to flee from the door.

This was same as the situation back at the Cloudmist Ridge. Perhaps, through making use of the intangibility and invisibility of his soul, he would be able to sneak away discreetly.

Life or death, it would hinge on this!

Chapter 955

Raising the Strength of the Puppets

Using the invisible and intangible properties of a soul, Zhang Xuan was able to carry the storage ring out through the cracks of the door discreetly by lying close to the ground.

As soon as he floated out, he immediately saw many Otherworldly Demons guarding the area, maintaining an airtight defense in the surroundings. No matter which direction he left in, there was a good chance that he would be discovered.

Zhang Xuan assessed his surroundings, vexed. *It seems like these Otherworldly Demons are veterans of the battlefield.*

Only those who had frequented the battlefield and collaborated with one another on multiple occasions could form such a tight defense.

On top of that, there were also defensive formations. It was no joke to say that not even a fly could hope to get in. It was no wonder the two Kings had allowed him to have some private time with the master teachers so easily. In the very first place, they had absolute trust that both him and the master teachers couldn't possibly get away.

Eye of Insight! Driving his Soul Depth, green lines began surfacing in Zhang Xuan's composed eyes.

Taking a look, Zhang Xuan smiled in relief. *While the defense is so tight that no cultivator could hope to get in or out without alerting the Otherworldly Demons, it seems like the defenses were aimed toward corporeal beings. In my soul form, I should still be able to get out with relative ease as long as I am careful.*

Special means had to be utilized to guard against souls, but it was apparent that such measures hadn't been set up in the area. After all, considering how long it had been since the soul oracles had gone missing, it would have been a waste of time and resources to do so.

But if I just leave like that, will they think that I am too soft and weak?

The fact that the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe had constructed a base in the Subterranean Gallery only went to show that they had malicious intentions in mind. Wouldn't it be unseemly for him, the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, to leave just like that after discovering the enemy's base?

I took a careful look when I arrived, and it seems like this base is constructed in alignment to the Seven Profound Spiritual Light Formation. As long as I destroy the center of the formation, I can undo the formation. Even if they manage to avert the backlash from the formation running amok, it will still make their hard work over all this time meaningless! Zhang Xuan thought as his lips crept up.

While he wasn't skilled in building things, he was definitely the master of demolition!

Even the Ten Great Master Teachers hadn't been able to stop him back when he was still in the Master Teacher Academy! Collapsing these buildings was truly just a walk in the park for him.

I should head over to take a look!

Zhang Xuan scanned his surroundings and confirmed the direction in which the center of the formation lay before heading over.

...

Shortly after Zhang Xuan left, the Goldenleaf King suddenly frowned.

Noticing his companion's expression, the Greenleaf King asked, "Brother Yin, what is wrong?"

The Goldenleaf King pondered for a moment before responding uncertainly, "I am not too sure, but for a moment, I thought I felt like something passed by me."

He had an innate sensitivity toward his surroundings, allowing him to perceive the happenings around him vividly. For just a brief moment, he felt like something had passed right before his eyes, but when he attempted to take a closer look, he was unable to see anything at all.

Of course, if he had swept the area with his Spiritual Perception, Zhang Xuan's soul would have been in plain view to him.

However, maintaining one's Spiritual Perception around one's surrounding was extremely taxing on one's spirit. Even as a Saint realm 4-dan expert, it was impossible for him to maintain it for an extended period of time.

It was precisely due to this opening that Zhang Xuan had been able to escape from the notice of the two Kings.

It didn't take long before Zhang Xuan slipped out of the encirclement. Heaving a sigh of relief, he picked up the pace and continued to proceed ahead with his storage ring beside him.

Soon, a majestic palace came into sight.

There were considerable differences in the formations used by Otherworldly Demons and humans. Nevertheless, through his Eye of Insight and the Library of Heaven's Path, these differences did little to impede Zhang Xuan. From the moment he arrived at the base, he had known that this palace was where the center of the formation was located.

He carefully entered descended to the ground.

In order to set up an airtight defense against him, nearly all of the Otherworldly Demons had been mobilized to guard the hall where he was supposed to be. As such, there was only a handful of Otherworldly Demons left to guard this important facility, thus allowing him to break in easily.

These Otherworldly Demons hadn't reached Spiritual Perception realm yet, and they didn't specialize in the study of souls either. Furthermore, through the Eye of Insight, the flaws in their defenses were as clear as day to Zhang Xuan, so he was able to sneak in without alerting anyone.

The palace was vast, taking up an area of more than ten thousand square meters. The walls and the pillars within were inscribed with kinds of bizarre inscriptions, reminiscent of ancient runes. At the very center was a huge alter, which was roughly eight meters long.

Realizing that he was unable to recognize the inscriptions after taking a closer look, Zhang Xuan asked Vicious telepathically, "What kind of inscriptions are these?"

Vicious took a glance at it and replied, "These are runic inscriptions unique to the

Otherworldly Demons. If inscribed in a specific manner, it has the effect of gathering spiritual energy, similar to the Spirit Gathering Formation of the humans."

"Spirit Gathering Formation?"

"Un. They are similar to some extent, but there are some differences between the two as well. A normal Spirit Gathering Formation only has the effect of gathering spiritual energy in a set area, but this runic formation has the effect of transforming the property of the spiritual energy to enhance the physical strength of Otherworldly Demons as well. It is somewhat similar to the formation that was inscribed in my underground chamber!" Vicious replied.

"Enhance the physical strength of Otherworldly Demons? Does that mean that it can be used to recharge the Otherworldly Demon puppets?" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

Back in the underground chamber, he had seen how Vicious recharged the energy of the puppets. After taking control of those puppets, he had used them several times, and the energy within them was already almost completely depleted. This was the reason he hadn't used them for such a long time.

If he could recharge the energy of those Otherworldly Demon puppets, he would have another card to use against the Otherworldly Demons gathered in the area.

"Under normal circumstances, it would be hard for outsiders to tap into the energy accumulated within the formation due to the restrictions inscribed into it. However, that isn't a problem for me. I can help recharge the puppets for you now if you'd like," said Vicious.

"That's good." With a relieved smile, Zhang Xuan drew out the twenty Otherworldly Demon puppets along with his body from the storage ring and returned to his body. After which, raising his arm ahead of him, a finger flew out from his palm and flew into the air, emanating a dense killing intent abruptly.

Feeling this immense energy, the puppets immediately kneeled down in deference.

"Un." Harrumphing in satisfaction, Vicious began speaking in a bizarre language, and in response to that, the puppets formed a neat queue and began marching up to the altar in the center of the room.

As the puppets reached the altar, the floating finger began drawing a series of bizarre

runes in the air

Weng!

The air trembled slightly for a brief moment before spiritual energy began gushing into the palace like a rapid torrent, nourishing the puppet standing right before the altar.

Geji! Geji!

A sharp glint returned to the torpid eyes of the puppet as its strength was swiftly restored back to its peak.

Incredible! Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in awe.

To his surprise, this method of infusing energy was even more effective and efficient than Cultivation Impartation 1.

From the looks of it, however, this method of infusing energy would likely only work on puppets. Had it been an ordinary cultivator instead, the cultivator would experience all of their meridians and acupoints rupturing apart within seconds under the vigorous infusion of violent energy and die on the spot.

As fast as it was, it was beyond the limits of the body of a human cultivator.

Perhaps due to prior experience, Vicious was extremely efficient. It didn't take too long for him to restore the energy within the twenty puppets.

With their energy restored, the puppets emanated a powerful fighting aura, seemingly ready to face any opponent.

It is a pity that they are too weak, possessing only the strength of a Saint realm 1-dan. They are a formidable force against normal opponents, but in the face of so many Otherworldly Demons, the aid they can provide is limited. Zhang Xuan sighed deeply as he shook his head.

These fellows were only at Saint realm 1-dan advanced stage or pinnacle. Against an army of two hundred Saint realm 1-dan and even a few Saint realm 2-dan Otherworldly Demons, they would be defeated in an instant.

Suddenly, a thought surfaced in Zhang Xuan's mind. *Wait a moment... All along, I have been thinking of them as the moving corpses of Otherworldly Demons, and naturally, it is impossible for a corpse to cultivate and raise its strength. But if I think of them as just plain puppets and modify their structure to make them more efficient... it should be possible for me to raise their fighting prowess swiftly!*

Due to the fact that the Otherworldly Demon puppets were forged from the bodies of real Otherworldly Demons, he had always regarded them as corpses whose cultivation had stagnated with their deaths. But if he were to view them as just puppets, if he could alter some of their mechanisms to make them more efficient, he would be able to raise their strength significantly.

Back in the Mountain of Records, he had altered the puppet made of Principal Mo Liuzhen's rib bone and raised its cultivation to Saint realm.

If he could do the same to the Otherworldly Demon puppets as well, they could become a strong card to utilize against the Otherworldly Demon army!

"Flaws!" Zhang Xuan muttered beneath his breath after having the Otherworldly Demons utilize their battle techniques.

Immersing his consciousness into the Library of Heaven's Path, he began to browse through the flaws in the Otherworldly Demon puppets.

"The greatest flaws in the Otherworldly Demon puppets are their crafting method and the materials used in their crafting. Wu Yangzi was renowned as the number one blacksmith of Hongyuan Empire, but he was ultimately only a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith. Otherwise, the Otherworldly Demon puppets could potentially achieve might comparable to a Saint realm 3-dan cultivator," Zhang Xuan muttered contemplatively after reading the books.

More often than not, one's smithing skills and the materials used were the main limiting factors to the prowess of an artifact, preventing it from reaching its maximum potential. This limitation could be fully seen in the Otherworldly Demon puppets.

Honestly speaking, Zhang Xuan was a little disappointed to learn that the limit of the Otherworldly Demon puppets was Saint realm 3-dan. He had thought that as long as he could perfect all aspects of the Otherworldly Demon puppets, he would be able to raise their strength to an unbelievable level. However, it seemed like he was thinking

too much.

Forget it, raising their cultivation to Saint realm 3-dan isn't too bad either, Zhang Xuan thought in consolation.

Even though the reality didn't meet his expectations, twenty Saint realm 3-dan puppets were still a formidable force to reckon with.

Of course, it still wouldn't be sufficient to deal with the army of two hundred outside.

Putting everything aside, the Greenleaf King and Goldenleaf King were Saint realm 4-dan experts. Even with the numerical advantage, it would be difficult for the twenty Saint realm 3-dan puppets to subdue them.

At Saint realm, the advancement of each cultivation realm signified a vast difference in one's fighting prowess.

This was particularly so for Saint realm 3-dan and Saint realm 4-dan.

Forget it, I should raise their strength first before deciding on my next move.

Having decided the source of the problem, Zhang Xuan walked up to the puppets and began striking them with his palm.

Pilipala!

A series of crisp echoes sounded, and the aura shrouding the twenty Otherworldly Demon puppets suddenly became sharper and more fearsome.

After he was done, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief before saying with an exhausted tone, "Alright, you can infuse spiritual energy into them now."

Had it not been for the many books he had gone through at the Celestial Designer School back then, which had given him a deep understanding of a puppet's internal structure, he never would have been able to succeed.

Even so, by the time he was done modifying the puppets, he felt as if his soul had been sapped dry, and he could pass out at any moment.

However, this was to be expected. After all, to perfect the many parts of the puppets,

he couldn't afford to make any mistake in any of the steps. Furthermore, there were various differences in the form and smithing technique used for the twenty Otherworldly Demon puppets, so he had to make some alterations between them as well, thus further complicating the matter. As such, his mind had to operate at maximum capacity throughout the entire duration.

Sitting with his legs crossed on the ground, Zhang Xuan took out the soul of the Bluehorn Dragon Beast and began absorbing its energy to recuperate.

Meanwhile, Vicious continued adjusting the runic inscriptions to fill up the strength of the newly-upgraded puppets.

Even with their parts perfected, if the puppets didn't have sufficient energy in store, they would still be unable to exert the strength equivalent to a Saint realm 3-dan cultivator.

This was just like a car; no matter how much horsepower it possessed, if it didn't have the required fuel to sustain it, it would be unable to drive it to the limit of its ability.

It was fortunate that there was plenty of spiritual energy in the surroundings for them to tap into, so that didn't pose a problem.

Hong long long!

As spiritual energy was swiftly pumped into the Otherworldly Demon puppets, the palace began to shake violently as the inscriptions on the walls and pillars started to dim and peel off.

At this point, Vicious suddenly said, "Master, it seems like there isn't sufficient energy here to use."

1. It is an ability exclusive to 6-star master teacher which involves pumping energy into a cultivator in order to raise the cultivator's cultivation swiftly.

Chapter 956

On the Verge of Tears, the Goldenleaf King

Outside the hall in which the many master teachers had been imprisoned, the two Kings frowned as they stared at the room before them intently.

"Why is there no movement inside at all?" the Greenleaf King asked with a livid face.

They had been waiting outside for nearly an hour now, and they had expected to hear the sounds of fighting as the fake Goldenleaf King killed a few master teachers to establish his dominance over them. Yet, contrary to their expectations, there was nothing at all. It was as if the people inside had vanished altogether!

"I also think that something is amiss here. Should we take a peek inside with our Spiritual Perception?" the Goldenleaf King asked.

"That doesn't seem like a good idea. The other party is an expert who is on par with us, so checking on him with our Spiritual Perception would be rather disrespectful. Furthermore, if what he is doing truly involves confidential information for the superiors, this might bring trouble upon us," the Greenleaf King replied with a conflicted expression.

If not for fear of the latter's strength, he would have already checked on the situation within with his Spiritual Perception instead of waiting helplessly outside.

"You are right." The Goldenleaf King nodded before falling silent.

Boom!

At that moment, the ground suddenly rumbled as an immense quantity of spiritual energy from the surroundings surged toward the palace at the center of the base.

With an awful look on his face, the Greenleaf King quickly turned to the subordinate beside him and asked authoritatively, "What is going on?"

"Reporting to Your Highness, the ruckus seems to be from the Palace of Runes." Tong

Yue hurriedly took a look, and his face immediately turned ghastly white.

The Palace of Runes was the center of their base. If something were to happen to it, all of the work they had done could very well be undone.

Frowning in displeasure, the Greenleaf King spoke as the ground rumbled violently once more. "Palace of Runes? Let's go take a look!"

Huala!

A cloud of dust rose as smoke swiftly permeated the base.

Following which, a large area of buildings began crumbling down as if a devastating avalanche had swept through the area. All of the defensive formations that had been set up on them dissipated as if ice before a scorching sun. There were even some that exploded due to their energy running amok, severely wounding the unguarded Otherworldly Demons in the area.

The formations were driven by the spiritual energy supplied by the Palace of Runes. If anything happened to the Palace of Runes, the other formations would be affected as well.

The more powerful a formation was, the greater the backlash when something happened to it. This was similar to a balloon filled with air. If the air within it were to be leaked all of a sudden, it could very well run out of control.

"My buildings..." Tong Yue nearly burst into tears on the spot.

Two months ago, the moment they had passed through the seal and entered the Subterranean Gallery, they had begun building this base. It had taken them a lot of effort and a great amount of resources in order to expand it to its current scale. Yet, for all of it to be reduced to rubble in the blink of an eye... He couldn't help but feel light-headed, and a stifling sensation welled up in his chest, causing him to spurt a huge mouthful of blood.

On the other hand, watching the destruction unfolding before his eyes, the Greenleaf King's body also twitched as he muttered, "The cause seems to be the depletion of spiritual energy in the Palace of Runes."

With his eye of discernment, he could easily tell the cause of the destruction. However,

the Palace of Runes was heavily guarded and reinforced with formations, so it should have been impossible for anything to happen to it in the first place.

Just as the Greenleaf King was bewildered by the situation before him, the Goldenleaf King's face abruptly warped in shock as he exclaimed, "How could this be?"

"What happened?" The Greenleaf King and Tong Yue turned their eyes over simultaneously.

"Look at the hall in front of us!" The Goldenleaf King pointed forward with a pale face.

Frowning, the duo turned their gazes in front, only to see that the hall before their eyes had collapsed into a cloud of dust and rubble as well.

"What is wrong? This hall was built using top-grade Bluemetal Stone and has been reinforced by many formations, but considering that most of the other buildings have collapsed too... it shouldn't come as any surprise that this building suffered the same fate," Tong Yue remarked, confused by the Goldenleaf King's huge response to the matter.

"Collapse your head! Where is that fellow and the master teachers? Don't you think it's weird how they didn't come out when the entire hall is already in such a state?" the Goldenleaf King bellowed furiously.

"This..." It was then that the duo realized, and their faces warped in astonishment. The Greenleaf King immediately activated his Spiritual Perception to peer into the rubble, and his body stiffened at the outcome of the scan.

Within the rubble, there was not a single living being to be sensed. It was as if that tribesman had vanished together with the many master teachers!

"They are gone." The Greenleaf King turned to look at the livid Goldenleaf King with a look of horror.

"We've been had by that fellow. Hurry, head to the Palace of Runes!" the Greenleaf King roared after realizing what had happened, and together with the Goldenleaf King, they quickly rushed over.

In the blink of an eye, they arrived at the collapsed Palace of Runes, and after a quick examination of the surroundings, their vision went dark.

With their eye of discernment, they could easily tell that this wasn't an accident but a man-made incident.

In other words, just a moment ago, someone had sapped the Palace of Runes dry of its spiritual energy and destroyed the inscriptions on the walls and pillars, resulting in the devastating collapse.

Otherwise, the Palace of Runes couldn't have been reduced to such a state even if an accident were to occur.

"Master teacher! That fellow must be a master teacher!" The Greenleaf King clenched his fist tightly as the truth suddenly dawned on him.

Except for a master teacher, it was impossible for an ordinary cultivator to tell that the Palace of Runes was the center of the entire base and destroy it so utterly. On top of that, the matter of the other party wanting some private time with the master teachers was extremely suspicious as well, especially given their disappearance shortly after. No matter how slow they might be, it was clear that the other party's purpose was not to interrogate them but to save them!

The Goldenleaf King stepped forward and exclaimed in disbelief, "But how did they get away? The both of us have been keeping a close eye on the hall, and there were defensive formations set up around the area as well."

To think that they, Kings of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, Saint realm 4-dan experts, would actually be toyed with by another! Just the thought of it left them frenzied.

"No matter how he got away, considering that he has just destroyed the Palace of Runes and that there is a huge group with him, he can't possibly have gotten too far away. Men, comb the area! If you find any traces of him, immediately report back. By no means should you engage them recklessly!" the Greenleaf King instructed as he turned around.

With so many old, weakened master teachers with him, he didn't believe that the other party could escape from them!

"Yes, Your Highness!" Tong Yue and the others replied before scattering all around.

"Damn it, damn it! Just who is that fellow!" After dispatching all of his subordinates,

the two Kings clenched their teeth tightly together as immense rage coursed through their bodies.

At this moment, a thought suddenly flashed across the Goldenleaf King's mind as he muttered contemplatively, "If he is a master teacher in disguise... could he possibly be the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy that they talked about earlier, Zhang Xuan?"

Back then, the stand-in principal Lu Feng had said that the fellow had claimed that he was Hongyuan's principal, Zhang Xuan, but they had shrugged it off, thinking that this was a method used by their tribesman to win their trust.

However, thinking back, that could very well have been the truth.

"Zhang Xuan?" the Greenleaf King repeated meaningfully before nodding his head.

This name was extremely foreign to them, but how could one who was able to become the principal of a Master Teacher Academy possibly be a simple figure?

"We will know the truth after we capture and interrogate him. I swear that I will tear that fellow apart for this humiliation!" the Greenleaf King roared furiously, and his voice echoed clearly even from a very far distance away.

...

While the two Kings were completely furious, at a considerable distance from the collapsed Palace of Runes, a storage ring fell from the sky, and shortly afterward, a figure appeared.

The figure was completely motionless for a brief moment before abruptly coming to live.

Hu!

Exhaling deeply, the figure smiled in relief, revealing his shiny, white teeth. The figure was Zhang Xuan, who had just escaped from the Palace of Runes.

Not bad. The puppets have reached Saint realm 3-dan, and they have been recharged as well. Even if I meet the Saint realm 4-dan Kings later on, I won't have to fear them.

Even though the rapid depletion of the energy through the puppet's absorption had caused the Palace of Runes to collapse, it had helped to bolster his current fighting force significantly.

With twenty experts to hold the ground, he would be able to fend off the Saint realm 4-dan experts. Even if he was unable to defeat them, he would at least be able to buy some time to escape.

"Alright, come out!"

Flicking his wrist, Zhang Xuan brought out the master teachers from his Anthive Nest.

"Where are we? Have we escaped?"

"This is the far south of the Subterranean Gallery; I have been here once before. We should be roughly two hundred li away from the Otherworldly Demons' base."

"Two hundred li away?"

...

After confirming their location, the master teachers swiftly assessed their surroundings. Realizing that there were no Otherworldly Demons around them, they turned to the figure before them with gratitude in their eyes.

The young man wasn't lying; he was indeed there to save them.

Noticing the gazes from the crowd, Zhang Xuan morphed from his Otherworldly Demon form back into his original appearance and switched to his master teacher robe. The six stars on the emblem pinned onto his chest gleamed brightly.

"Zhang shi, thank you for saving our lives." An elder clasped his fist, and the others behind him quickly followed suit.

"There's no need to stand on ceremony. We are all master teachers, so it's only natural to help one another in times of need." Zhang Xuan waved his hands to gesture that it was fine.

These men were willing to put their lives on the line for the justice they held in their hearts. Zhang Xuan felt that such good men shouldn't be left in the lurch.

Interjecting in the midst of the others' words, Zhang Xuan said, "We still aren't in a position to rest easy yet. Having sneaked out of their base right before their eyes, the Otherworldly Demons are surely combing the area frenziedly for us at the moment. It is only a matter of time before they find us here. For the time being, you should find a place to rest and recuperate. Make sure to find somewhere secure so that you won't be found!"

"Rest and recuperate? We can't!" One of the master teachers frowned. "The Otherworldly Demons have already begun building their base, and there are even two Otherworldly Demon Kings who have infiltrated the Subterranean Gallery. It is clear that they are up to something! We have to stop them, or else... I can hardly imagine the consequences myself!"

The Otherworldly Demons had clearly come prepared. In such a situation, they couldn't afford to waste time to rest and recuperate.

"Don't worry about that. I will deal with it." Zhang Xuan waved his hands.

The reason he was there was to investigate and resolve the peculiarities happening with the Mausoleum Tablet. So far, he had only destroyed their base; the two hundred Otherworldly Demons were still alive and kicking. So, how could he leave yet?

"You are going back alone? That won't do; it is too dangerous!" the crowd exclaimed in horror.

"In your current states, even if you do come along, you won't be able to offer any help. What you need to do right now is recuperate from your injuries so that you can find the strength to battle with the Otherworldly Demons once more!" He knew that the master teachers were worried about him, but he still shook his head.

It wasn't that he didn't trust the master teachers, but the force they were going against were simply too powerful. The master teachers couldn't possibly battle them in their current state.

If they went with him, Zhang Xuan would have to divide his attention between the Otherworldly Demons and taking care of them.

"This..." The faces of the master teachers reddened in embarrassment.

The other party was right. Yes, they were 6-star pinnacle master teachers, but against

more than two hundred Otherworldly Demons and two Saint realm 4-dan Kings, they were completely powerless.

"Zhang shi, we might not be powerful enough to defeat their army, but you can't possibly go there alone either! At the very least, we should be of some help to you. With our combined strength, even if we can't wipe out their forces, we should still be able to deal significant damage to them!"

"Indeed! There are more than forty of us here. If each of us kill an Otherworldly Demon, that will lessen the pressure on you significantly."

"Allow us to go with you! As long as we proceed more carefully this time around, we won't be cornered by them as easily as before!"

The crowd was still worried.

1:two hundred li ~100km

Chapter 957

Breakthrough, Nascent Saint!

"Since I was able to save you from their hands, that only goes to show that I have my own means to stay alive. Thus, there is really no need for you to worry. In the worst-case scenario, I will just flee from them!" Zhang Xuan said with a kind smile.

"I know that you don't fear death, but that doesn't mean that you should throw away your lives like that. At the very least, you must make your lives count! I will go ahead first, and if I fail, you will have to serve as the final line of defense until help arrives. Otherwise, if those Otherworldly Demons charge out of the Subterranean Gallery, who knows how many lives will be lost?"

"Ah..."

The crowd fell silent.

Indeed. Even if they didn't fear death, their deaths shouldn't be meaningless.

They had to make it count every single bit it was worth.

"Alright, we will listen to you and rest up first. Then, Zhang shi... you have to be careful, too! If it is really beyond our means, we will report to the headquarters and have them deal with this matter," an elder said.

"Rest assured!" Zhang Xuan replied with a confident smile.

"Un." At this moment, the master teachers couldn't help but recall the various miracles that the young man before them had produced, and all of a sudden, they couldn't help but feel that the situation wasn't as desperate as they thought.

Considering how the other party had saved them despite the encirclement of so many Otherworldly Demons, it was clear that he possessed means far beyond them. Perhaps, he might just have a way to deal with the Otherworldly Demons.

Just as Zhang Xuan was about to leave, he suddenly recalled something and asked,

"Right, do you all have any formation flags or formation plates in your hands? The higher the grade, the better!"

"Formation flags? Formation plates?" Everyone exchanged confused glances with one another.

"I have a set of grade-6 formation flags here. There are 120 of them; you can use them to set up the Zhengyu Illusory Formation."

"I have 81 of them here, you can use them to set up a grade-6 Slaughter Formation!"

"Before I left, I bought a grade-6 pinnacle formation plate. However, it is a Beguilement Formation, so I don't know how useful it will be in a battle."

"I also have a grade-6 pinnacle formation plate here."

Upon hearing that Zhang Xuan needed formation flags and formation plates, the master teachers quickly took out whatever they had, and it didn't take long for a huge pile of items to appear before Zhang Xuan.

These men knew that they would face great danger in the Subterranean Gallery, so they had exchanged all of their possessions for artifacts that would be useful in dangerous situations. Formation flags and formation plates were particularly useful in dealing with stronger enemies, so they had prepared plenty of those.

Looking at the mountain of formation flags and formation plates before him, Zhang Xuan said with a chuckle, "Not bad, this is more than enough."

As expected of 6-star pinnacle master teachers, they did have quite a lot of good items with them. Even though most of the items they had produced were grade-6, they were generally toward the higher end.

With one swift motion, he stowed everything into his storage ring before clasping his fist. "Farewell!"

After saying those words, he turned around and left. But before he could get very far, a voice sounded from behind. "Principal Zhang, wait for a moment."

He turned around to find that the one who had spoken was Lu Feng.

His face was flushed crimson as he looked at Zhang Xuan.

"Lu shi?" Zhang Xuan responded questioningly.

"Principal Zhang, I... I wish to apologize to you for the matters that happened before. I hope that you can forgive me for my foolishness," Lu Feng said hesitantly.

"Lu shi, there's no need to worry about that. As master teachers, it is our responsibility to guard against Otherworldly Demons; I don't blame you for being too wary," Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

"Thank you for your magnanimity." After a moment of hesitation, Lu Feng flicked his wrist and took out a round formation plate. "This is a formation plate that I obtained some time ago. It's a grade-7 Beguilement Formation; hopefully, it will be of some use to you."

"Grade-7 formation?" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up as he hurriedly took it.

It was hard to tell what kind of material the formation plate was made of, but it felt heavy. Inscribed on it was a complex inscription consisting of lines so fine that he could hardly see them even with his Eye of Insight.

"The creator inscribed it carefully using their Spiritual Perception to check the formation plate. It can exert an incredible might once activated, so it should do you well against the Otherworldly Demons. I happened to obtain it by some stroke of luck, and I haven't been able to bring myself to use it," Lu Feng explained.

"Inscribed using Spiritual Perception? No wonder!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

A grade-7 formation plate could only be inscribed by a 7-star formation master, and the prerequisite to becoming a 7-star formation master was to possess the cultivation of a Saint realm 2-dan Spiritual Perception realm.

Spiritual Perception was a method of perceiving the world through one's soul, allowing one to perceive the world with far greater sensitivity than with one's eyes.

"Thank you!" Knowing that the formation plate would be very useful to him, Zhang Xuan nodded in gratitude before stowing it into his storage ring.

"Alright, I will be leaving now!"

Stepping off, Zhang Xuan began charging ahead, and it didn't take long for him to disappear before everyone's eyes.

After he left, the master teachers turned their gazes to Lu Feng.

"Is that man... really the new principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy?"

Till this point, the crowd could still hardly believe it. After all, the other party was simply too young.

"That's right." Lu Feng nodded.

Previously, he had thought that the Ten Great Master Teachers nominating him to become a principal was a huge mistake, but from the looks of it now, it seemed like he was the one lacking foresight.

To be able to save them from the hands of so many Otherworldly Demons calmly and yet remain humble and not claim credit for his work on top of that, it was doubtful that Principal Mo Liuzhen from back then would have been able to do the same.

At the very least, he knew that he wouldn't have been able to do the same if in the other party's shoes.

"He might very well be the most formidable principal that our Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy has ever had, ushering in an era of greatness for our academy," Lu Feng muttered to himself as he gazed in the direction that Zhang Xuan disappeared in.

It was only after seeing what that young man had done that he realized how formidable the other party was. With such a great man earnestly putting his effort into the academy, how could the academy possibly not prosper?

...

After proceeding ahead for a moment, Zhang Xuan stopped at a valley.

*I won't be their match at this rate. I have to find a solution... * Even though he had twenty Saint realm 3-dan puppets, it would still be difficult for him to stand his ground against more than two hundred Saint realm 1-dan and 2-dan Otherworldly Demons and two Saint realm 4-dan Kings. The situation wasn't in his favor.

He had to find a suitable countermeasure that could wipe out the entire group in a single move so as to terminate any possible threat from them.

I should first take a look at this grade-7 formation plate. Flicking his wrist, Zhang Xuan took out the formation plate that Lu Feng had given him and pumped his zhenqi into it furiously.

Hmm? Nothing? Zhang Xuan frowned.

Was the formation plate spoiled?

That wasn't it.

"Flaws," Zhang Xuan muttered, and a corresponding book concerning the formation plate appeared in his Library of Heaven's Path. Upon taking a look, his face darkened, and he really wanted to hide somewhere in shame.

It was fortunately no one had seen it, or else he would have really made a fool out of himself!

It was not that the formation plate was spoiled, but... his zhenqi wasn't strong enough to activate the formation plate yet!

His current zhenqi cultivation was only at Half-Saint pinnacle. Altogether, his fighting prowess was on par with a Saint realm 1-dan cultivator. He could easily drive a grade-6 formation plate without trouble, but grade-7... That was clearly beyond his means!

The Byzantium Helios Beast has reached Spiritual Perception realm, but as a saint beast, he is unable to activate a formation plate. Less has to be said about the Golden Origin Cauldron, a Saint-tier artifact. Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella in distress.

Perhaps... if I raise my cultivation to Nascent Saint pinnacle, with the sheer strength of the Saint Ascension Decipher, I might be able to exert power comparable to a Saint realm 2-dan cultivator and activate this grade-7 formation plate!

Since he was unable to activate the formation plate in his current state, the logical thing to do was to attempt a breakthrough.

It was fortunate that he had procured the Lightning Resonance Rock beforehand, which was required for his breakthrough to Nascent Saint.

Alright, time to begin! Taking a deep breath, Zhang Xuan leaped into the Myriad Anthive Nest without any hesitation.

To attempt a breakthrough, he would require a quiet environment. Given that the Otherworldly Demons were combing the area to search for him, he couldn't possibly cultivate peacefully in the open.

After entering the Myriad Anthive Nest, Zhang Xuan sat down beneath the Bodhi Tree and took out a pile of high-tier spirit stones with a flick of his wrist.

The first batch of profits from the Shen Clan consisted of more than three thousand high-tier spirit stones. While he had used five hundred of them to raise the cultivation of the candidates for the Master Teacher Selection, he still had a sizeable amount of them remaining. At least for the time being, he didn't need to worry about having insufficient spirit stones.

He casually took out a couple of formation flags and set up a Spirit Gathering Formation in the area. Spiritual energy was swiftly drawn from the high-tier spirit stone, creating a dense mist-like congregation of spiritual energy in the air.

With all of the preparations ready, Zhang Xuan held onto the Lightning Resonance Rock tightly in his hands and closed his eyes to begin cultivating.

Gugugu!

Pure, condensed zhenqi coursed through his veins like a mighty dragon, pushing his cultivation further up. At the same time, every single pore of his body was greedily taking in the rich spiritual energy in the surroundings, as if a ravenous behemoth enjoying a luxurious feast.

He had already reached Half-Saint pinnacle two months ago, but due to the lack of the Lightning Resonance Rock, he had only been able to further reinforce his cultivation again and again. At this point, his desire for a breakthrough was already irrepressible, like an arid land desiring for rain.

With the Lightning Resonance Stone in his hand and the rich spiritual energy in the surroundings, Zhang Xuan's aura swiftly went through a qualitative change, becoming far sharper and more powerful than before.

Geji geji!

Absorbing the spiritual energy, Zhang Xuan swiftly converted it into zhenqi to knock at the bottleneck limiting his cultivation relentlessly, and eventually, the bottleneck began to loosen.

Hong long!

After some time, with a deafening buzz, he finally broke through the bottleneck. In that instant, Zhang Xuan felt his eyesight and hearing becoming exceptionally clear, and his ability to analyze also became faster than ever.

Nascent Saint, reached!

Nascent Saint was the foundation to achieving a real breakthrough to Sainthood, the preparation to a cultivator's metamorphosis of their level of existence. As such, there was a significant enhancement in one's zhenqi and soul.

It might only have been a cultivation stage of difference between Half-Saint pinnacle and Nascent Saint primary stage, but this single hurdle signified the evolution of a fish into a dragon. 1

Furthermore, he cultivated the Saint Ascension Decipher, which made his zhenqi far more condensed and powerful than ordinary cultivators.

At the same time, his zhenqi strength also advanced from the previous 84,000,000 ding to 90,000,000 ding!

Continue!

Even though he had achieved a breakthrough, he knew that it would still be difficult for him to drive his grade-7 formation plate. Thus, Zhang Xuan continued with his cultivation.

Having achieved the breakthrough, everything else was relatively easier.

Four hours later, he managed to advance to Nascent Saint realm pinnacle.

At the same time, the strength from his zhenqi cultivation had also exceeded the 100,000,000 ding mark, reaching 120,000,000 ding!

More important, the Origin Core in his dantian had also assumed a perfectly round

shape, emanating a brilliant light that seemed to indicate that a breakthrough was just around the corner.

From the looks of it, it seems I have achieved a Second Grade Pinnacle Origin Core!

Mu shi had put in so much time and effort to cultivating the Saint Ascension Decipher, but he had only succeeded in forming a Second Grade Advanced Origin Core. On the other hand, Zhang Xuan hadn't achieved a breakthrough to Saint realm yet, but he had already reached Second Grade Pinnacle.

However, this was to be expected. Considering that he cultivated the Heaven's Path Divine Art and possessed the Heaven's Path zhenqi, if he couldn't achieve this much, he could just knock himself dead with a blob of tofu.

As long as I reinforce my Origin Core, its grade should continue to rise. It shouldn't be too difficult for me to achieve First Grade! Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

Fortunately, he hadn't spent so much effort and paid such a heavy price for nothing.

As long as he could successfully forge a First Grade Origin Core, his fighting prowess should increase considerably.

Perhaps, he might even become a Celestial Saint.

Of course, it would still take him quite a bit of effort to reinforce his Origin Core and condense it further.

But I don't have the luxury to do that at the moment. For the time being, I should try activating the grade-7 formation!

Knowing that he didn't have much time to spare, Zhang Xuan took out the grade-7 formation plate once more.

1. This is a phrase from a Chinese saying. It is said that in Shanxi Province's Hejin City, there is a downstream against two sharp cliffs, and the top lies a Dragon's Gate. Every spring, carps will try to rush up the stream, and those who succeed will evolve to become dragons, thus the saying 'carp entering the Dragon's Gate'.

Chapter 958

Grade-7 Formation Plate

Holding the grade-7 formation plate in his hand, Zhang Xuan began pumping his rich zhenqi into it.

Tzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz!

Different from before, the formation plate began to tremble violently under the infusion of his zhenqi.

Boom!

A brilliant light burst into the surroundings, forming a sphere with a radius of several hundred meters.

As the sphere expanded, mist started to appear within, shaping out an entirely different world, an extremely bizarre one. Putting aside anyone else, even he could easily lose his sense of direction within it.

This is the grade-7 formation... Lu Xu Beguilement Formation? Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

Without activating the formation plate, it would be hard for him to see through what kind of formation was inscribed on it. Even though the Library of Heaven's Path did state the flaws regarding the formation plate, that was only limited to the material and the formation blueprint.

Only by activating it and seeing it with his own eyes would he know what kind of formation it was and how powerful it would be.

Lu Xu had been a skilled formation master five thousand years ago. Back then, while he was trapped amid a misty mountain range, he had suddenly found the inspiration to create this Beguilement Formation. Even though it was only a grade-7 intermediate formation, it could exert might comparable to an advanced or even pinnacle formation, such that even Saint realm 5-dan experts could potentially fall for its

beguilement briefly.

This was also the reason this formation was extremely famous, and there was a record of it in the library of the Formation Master School. It was also through the record in there that Zhang Xuan had learned about it.

An idea popped into Zhang Xuan's mind. *His surname is Lu as well. Could Lu Xu possibly be Lu Feng's ancestor?*

However, knowing that this wasn't the time to be thinking about such miscellaneous matters, Zhang Xuan swiftly shrugged it off.

*In any case, with this formation, I will stand a significantly better chance of dealing with those Otherworldly Demons. Nevertheless, I still have to plan my operation carefully first... *

With a surge in his cultivation and a formidable formation plate in his hands, Zhang Xuan's confidence was boosted. He left the Myriad Anthive Nest and returned to the Subterranean Gallery.

Just like before, the area was still filled with killing intent and darkness.

Contorting his muscles and bones, he turned into the form of an Otherworldly Demon he had seen previously before heading in the direction he escaped from previously.

Before he could get far, he saw two Otherworldly Demons flitting in his direction.

"Don't you think that it is weird? There are nearly forty of them, so how could they escape from our encirclement without the slightest trace?"

"I also find it very weird. I was standing on alert the whole time, my both eyes staring intently at every movement around the hall. I am certain that not a person has come out from it, but the people inside just simply vanished into thin air. More importantly, we have already searched for such long a time, but there is not a person to be seen. Could it be that they were not master teachers we caught but ghosts?"

The two Otherworldly Demons were chatting with one another as they scanned the ground from the sky.

Not even the Goldenleaf King and Greenleaf King had been able to make sense out of

Zhang Xuan and the many master teachers' disappearance, let alone the rest of them.

More importantly, it was inconceivable to them that so many people had been able to escape from right under their noses without them noticing anything at all.

At that moment, they suddenly saw a tribesman flying toward them, and they frowned.

"How is it? Did either of you find anything?" the tribesman asked them as soon as he noticed them.

One of the two Otherworldly Demons couldn't help but ask doubtfully upon seeing the other party, "Hua Wu, weren't you dispatched in another direction? Why are you here?"

The two hundred or so Otherworldly Demons who had passed through the seal were from the same squadron, so they knew one another very well.

They clearly remembered that the fellow before them had been dispatched in another direction, so why would he appear where they were?

"Oh, I found a clue while searching there, and it was through tracing the clue that I got here!" Hua Wu explained.

"Clue? What clue is it?" The eyes of the two Otherworldly Demons lit up.

"Here it is..." Hua Wu flicked his wrist, took out a jade token, and passed it over.

Curious, the duo hurriedly lowered their heads to take a closer look. However, before they could see what was written on the jade token, they suddenly sensed that two fists were heading right toward their heads.

Hong long!

The fists carried immense strength that threatened to blast apart the air. The shock wave that rippled from the fist was so powerful that even the ground beneath was jolted apart.

"You..." Knowing that there was something wrong with the other party, the faces of the two Otherworldly Demons darkened, and they hurriedly sent out a fist each to protect themselves.

Peng! Peng!

Four fists collided, and the two Otherworldly Demons felt a devastating might coursing through their bodies before they swiftly plummeted toward the ground.

Boom!

Their bodies formed two massive depressions in the ground.

"Nascent Saint pinnacle, it is indeed as strong as I expected!" Hua Wu remarked as he descended to the ground. He then raised his leg and stomped on the heads of the duo who had sunk into the ground.

Peng! Peng!

Before the two Otherworldly Demons could process what was going on, their heads were crushed, reducing them to mere corpses.

"Good!"

Seeing how easily he had subdued the two Saint realm 1-dan Otherworldly Demons, Hua Wu's eyes lit in excitement.

Naturally, Hua Wu was Zhang Xuan in disguise.

With the surge in his cultivation, he had wanted to try out how powerful he was at the moment. It was only after trying it that he realized how fearsome the Saint Ascension Decipher was. Putting aside those of a similar cultivation realm, even an Otherworldly Demon possessing a higher cultivation was no match for him at all!

They weren't even able to withstand a blow from him.

Let me see what they have. Zhang Xuan grabbed the storage rings from the fingers of the two Otherworldly Demons and immersed his consciousness into them. A moment later, he shook his head.

While these fellows possessed strength comparable to 6-star master teachers, their wealth was clearly nowhere near their master teacher equivalents. Adding up the both of their entire fortune, it wasn't even worth ten high-tier spirit stones!

It is no wonder these Otherworldly Demons wish to invade the Master Teacher Continent. Most likely, the otherworldly battlefield is lacking in resources as well.

Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan tapped on the two bodies, destroyed them, and smoothed out the depressions in the ground. After all was done, he was prepared to set off and find his next target. However, at that moment, a thought came to his mind, and he morphed his appearance into one of the two Otherworldly Demons he had just killed.

It was impossible for him to kill the two hundred or so Otherworldly Demons simultaneously, but it was still possible for him to dwindle their numbers bit by bit.

In any case, he had plenty of time to spare, so he was in no hurry.

After thoroughly preparing, he advanced ahead, and not too long later, he encountered two more Otherworldly Demons. Using the same method, he slayed them easily.

Most of the Otherworldly Demons who were out combing the area were only at Saint realm 1-dan. Given his current prowess, dealing with them wasn't a problem at all. Even without making use of his puppets, he could eliminate them easily.

Proceeding forward like that, he arrived at the base an hour later.

It had been entirely reduced to rubble, but a significant number of Otherworldly Demons were standing upon it, seemingly attempting to rebuild the base even though they knew what they were doing wouldn't amount to much.

After all, they had spent nearly two months constructing the base. To restore it entirely within a short period of time was completely impossible.

The Greenleaf King and Goldenleaf King seem to be around here. Among the crowd, there were two extraordinarily powerful Otherworldly Demons floating in the air. It was the two Kings from before.

At this moment, there was a deep frown on their foreheads, indicating their displeasure.

"Reporting to Your Highness, there isn't any signs of the master teachers in this direction.

"Reporting to Your Highness, there was nothing on my side either."

"It is as if they have vanished into thin air, there is nothing over here either."

From time to time, there would be Otherworldly Demons stepping forward to report the current situation to them.

As Zhang Xuan had fled in his soul form, which was both intangible and invisible, he hadn't left any traces behind. It would take a miracle for these Saint realm 1-dan Otherworldly Demons to be able to track him down.

"Damn it, how could forty people just vanish into thin air like that? Just what is happening?"

"How did that bastard do it?"

Not only were the Otherworldly Demons perplexed by the situation before them, even the Greenleaf King and Goldenleaf King were baffled as well.

Around forty old, weakened master teachers, who seemed like they were on the verge of collapsing, actually succeeded in fleeing from right under the noses of two hundred of them, and they actually weren't able to find anything at all. It was simply too inconceivable and eerie.

At this point, the Goldenleaf King suddenly recalled the bizarre sensation he had felt while waiting outside the hall earlier, and he narrowed his eyes. "Could it be... the means of a soul oracle?"

"Soul oracle?" the Greenleaf King replied doubtfully, unsure of what the Goldenleaf King was getting at.

"Un. When we were guarding outside the hall, didn't I tell you that I felt something pass by us? I feel that he might have gotten away then. Think about it, to be able to escape right in front of our eyes without being discovered, there can only be one possibility... that fellow has utilized the means of a soul oracle!" the Goldenleaf King said.

The Greenleaf King frowned. "Soul oracle? Didn't the Master Teacher Pavilion eradicate that occupation because they pledged loyalty to us?"

Soul oracle was a rather unorthodox occupation in the Master Teacher Continent. Back then, they had pledged loyalty to the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, and after the Master Teacher Pavilion found out about it, the Master Teacher Pavilion had launched a devastating assault to wipe them off the face of the world, terminating their heritage for good.

But for a master teacher, who was most likely the principal of a Master Teacher Academy, to be skilled in the means of a soul oracle... that didn't sound too likely.

"The heritage of the soul oracles has indeed disappeared from the face of the world, so I am rather puzzled by the situation, too. But other than that, I can think of no other possibility," the Goldenleaf King answered with a frown.

While the duo was speaking with one another, a tribesman suddenly flew before them hurriedly and reported, "Your Highness... I think I found the trail of the master teachers!"

"You found their trail?" Hearing those words, the eyes of the duo immediately lit up as they turned their gazes to the tribesman hurriedly.

"Un. I found traces that are distinctive of the footsteps of humans, but I dared not follow them too far. Thus, I rushed back here to report the matter to you!" the tribesman explained.

The Greenleaf King nodded. "Well done!"

Considering that their tribesmen were only at Saint realm 1-dan, it was very likely that they would have been killed if they had attempted to follow the trail recklessly.

"Which direction is it in? Bring us over to take a look!" the Greenleaf King swiftly commanded.

"It's in that direction..." the tribesman replied.

"Alright, we shall head over to take a look."

Nodding, the Greenleaf King was just about to get that fellow to lead the way when the Goldenleaf King suddenly stopped him. "Wait a moment!"

The Greenleaf King glanced at his companion in bewilderment. "What's wrong?"

"Have you forgotten about the bizarre means that fellow possesses?" the Goldenleaf King asked.

"This..." The face of the Greenleaf King immediately tensed as he recalled how that fellow was even able to disguise as an Otherworldly Demon King. If the tribesman before them was that fellow in disguise, it was very likely that the other party was trying to lead them into a trap.

"I will take a look!" Frowning, the Greenleaf King swiftly extended his Spiritual Perception to the tribesman before him.

"Your Highness..."

The tribesman also didn't expect that the two Kings would suddenly do this, and his face immediately paled with fright. The fists hidden within his sleeves tightened subconsciously.

"He is..."

After taking a closer look at the tribesman before him with his Spiritual Perception, the Greenleaf King was just about to speak when a loud explosion sounded.

Boom!

Mist swiftly pervaded the surroundings, shrouding a radius of several hundred meters around them.

Tzzzzzz!

Those who were trapped in the mist found themselves losing their ability to discern which direction they were facing altogether. It was as if their senses had been confounded all of a sudden, robbing them of the basic ability to perceive their surroundings properly.

The Goldenleaf King's eyes narrowed as his body stiffened in astonishment. "This is... a grade-7 Beguilement Formation!"

Against a Beguilement Formation of such a high grade, even he would be unable to escape from it in the short term.

He swiftly shot a glance toward the Greenleaf King beside him, only to find the latter had disappeared without a trace. He tried to look around him, but he found that his mind was a complete mess. He had already lost track of where he was.

Chapter 959

Secret Code

"No doubt about it, that tribesman is definitely that Zhang Xuan fellow in disguise!"

At this point, everything was as clear as the day to the Goldenleaf King, and his face turned livid in rage.

They had just been thinking about how they could capture that fellow, but who would have thought that he would appear before them, disguised as one of their own, to release this formation plate on them?

Had they been prepared beforehand, they might still have been able to destroy the formation with brute force in the moment that it was activated. However, with them standing within the activated formation, it wasn't as easy to do so anymore. They had to find the center of the formation first.

"Humph! A grade-7 formation might be formidable, but I happen to be skilled in formations. I don't believe that I won't be able to unravel this!"

The Goldenleaf King felt extremely furious, but he knew that it wasn't the time for him to lose his temper. Thus, he suppressed his anger and began to assess the formation calmly.

Of the many Kings, he was the one who was the most skilled in the field of formations. This was also the reason he had been chosen to cross the seal. If the other party had used a grade-7 pinnacle formation to trap him, it would still have taken him a fair bit of effort. However, not only had the formation not reached grade-7 pinnacle, it had also been activated from a formation plate instead of formation flags. It was impossible for a formation of such caliber to trap him!

The Goldenleaf King flew in the direction that he perceived as upward, and a few breaths later, he realized that his surroundings were still completely hazy. After which, he stopped and attempted to fly front, back, left, and right as well.

"To be able to distort the surroundings and one's sense of direction to such an extent,

this formation sure is formidable!" the Goldenleaf King remarked with a grim expression.

Based on his analysis, the formation wasn't as simple as it seemed.

He was confident that he would definitely be able to break apart the formation with time, but it would be extremely difficult for him to succeed in the short run!

"Argh!"

The Goldenleaf King had just taken out a compass, hoping to analyze where the Life Gate of the formation lay, when he suddenly heard a scream of agony from the depths of the formation. Following which, the sound of an object crashing to the ground echoed loudly.

"That fellow is assaulting our tribesmen?" The Goldenleaf King narrowed his eyes menacingly

Beguilement Formations usually didn't wield the power to kill others, so being trapped within one wasn't a big deal. Furthermore, the formation that had trapped them was activated from a formation plate, which was extremely taxing on the cultivator's zhenqi. It might have been able to trap them for a short period, but once the other party ran out of his zhenqi, the formation would automatically be released, and the tables would be turned around. They would be at their full might, unharmed, whereas the other party would have experienced a dip in his fighting prowess from being sapped of his zhenqi.

He had just been thinking that he could stall for time within the formation since it would be more disadvantageous for the other party the longer the battle continued. However, who could have known that the fellow would have the strength to attack their tribesmen while the formation was still activated!

That fellow was courting death!

With a leap, he immediately rushed in the direction of the scream, and as expected, he found a tribesman who had been killed with a single punch. The storage ring that should have been on the tribesman's finger was missing, presumably taken away.

"Argh!"

The next moment, another scream of agony was heard. Yet another tribesman had been done in.

They had dispatched all two hundred of their tribesmen to comb through the area to search for the master teachers, and those who were currently in the base were those who had returned after finding nothing at all. There were around fifty of them in total.

From the looks of it, it seemed like that fellow was intending to wipe out all of the personnel they had stationed at the base.

The price they had to pay in order to send these tribesmen over was unimaginably large. The loss of every single one of them was a huge price to pay, and yet, the other party intended to wipe out their forces. He was dreaming!

Flicking his wrist, the Goldenleaf King took out a jade token.

It was a Correspondence Jade Token, an artifact unique to the Otherworldly Demons.

With it, he could easily sense the closest distressed tribesman to him and lend him his aid.

Hu!

The jade token flew from his hand, headed in a certain direction, and the Goldenleaf King hurriedly followed it.

But by the time he arrived, there was nothing more than a mere corpse lying on the ground. The tribesman had already been killed.

After seeing that, he immediately activated his Correspondence Jade Token once more, hoping to save the next one, but the other party was still a step faster than him.

By the time he stumbled upon the eighth corpse of his tribesman, the Goldenleaf King was already completely frenzied.

Whenever he used the Correspondence Jade Token to seek the next distressed tribesman, he could sense from the jade token that the tribesman was still unharmed. Yet, no matter how fast he traveled, the distressed tribesman would be dead by the time he arrived. It felt like the other party was forever a step ahead of him no matter what he did, as if the other party knew of every movement that he was making.

"To be able to maneuver around the formation so easily and hunt down our tribesmen, that fellow's comprehension of formations is at least equivalent to the human standards of 7-star," the Goldenleaf King remarked with a darkened face, realizing how fearsome the opponent he was facing was.

If that fellow was only able to activate the formation plate but knew not of the internal functioning of the formation, he would have only been able to trap them but not maneuver around freely to slay them. On top of that, it was clear that the other party was tracking his whereabouts through his formation. In terms of comprehension of formations, the other party could be said to be on par with him!

Or perhaps... even superior to him!

"Damn it! You'd better pray that you never fall into my hands, or else I will make you suffer a fate worse than death!" the Goldenleaf King spat furiously through clenched jaws.

At that moment, he suddenly felt an overwhelming killing intent gushing into the air, following which, the sounds of battle drifted over.

"It's the Greenleaf King!" The Goldenleaf King's eyes lit up as he quickly rushed over.

He had fought with that Zhang Xuan fellow when he was disguised back then, and the latter wielded strength on par with him. Given the strength of the Greenleaf King, he should be able to stall that Zhang Xuan fellow for a fair amount of time. As long as he could arrive on time and team up with the Greenleaf King to fight against that Zhang Xuan fellow, their combined force would be more than sufficient to overpower the other party and kill him!

Hu la!

In just a few moments, he arrived at the area where the fighting sounds originated from. The Greenleaf King was indeed clashing with another fellow.

The opponent that the Greenleaf King was facing was indeed the Otherworldly Demon who had released the formation while reporting the news to them.

The both of them were incredibly powerful, raising powerful shock waves as they crossed hands.

"Greenleaf King, I will help you!" Roaring furiously, the Goldenleaf King charged into the battlefield to aid his companion.

At the same moment, that Zhang Xuan fellow seemed to have noticed his presence and swiftly turned around to flee. In the blink of an eye, he disappeared into the depths of the Beguilement Formation.

"Where do you think you are escaping to!" the Goldenleaf King roared as he prepared to give chase, but at that moment, he heard the voice of the Greenleaf King.

"Don't! He is the one controlling the formation. We risk falling into his trap if we give chase recklessly!"

The Goldenleaf King paused for a moment before realizing the same too and nodded in agreement. "You're right."

Turning around, he saw the Greenleaf King clutching his chest. There was a massive palm print of roughly two inches deep imprinted on the other party's chest, nearly crushing his heart.

The Goldenleaf King was astonished. "You... How did you suffer such heavy injuries?"

Given that his strength was roughly equal to that fellow's, the Greenleaf King should have been able to at least stand his ground against the other party. Even if it had been an unexpected assault, it shouldn't have been possible for the Greenleaf King to have been so severely wounded.

Had the palm print been just a little deeper, the Greenleaf King might already have died!

"Cough cough! That fellow... he disguised himself as you... I let my guard down for a moment..."

As he spoke, the Greenleaf King spurted a mouthful of blood as his face paled feebly.

"He disguised himself as me?" Hearing those words, the Goldenleaf King clenched his fists tightly.

Indeed, he had nearly forgotten that the fellow had the ability to disguise himself as one of their own flawlessly. Back then, the other party had even been able to list the

flaws of his cultivation technique accurately. If the other party had disguised himself as him, it was understandable that the Greenleaf King would unwittingly have let his guard down.

"That fellow has the ability to morph his appearance at will, and he can even imitate the aura of one's weapon and soul, making him an extremely dangerous opponent. You must be careful as well!" the Greenleaf King advised.

"Un." The Goldenleaf King nodded grimly.

In the first place, the limited visibility and inability to discern directions in the Beguilement Formation was already a huge handicap for them. The other party's ability to disguise himself as them only served to worsen the situation, making it difficult for them to trust one another.

In other words, any single person he encountered could very well be that fellow in disguise.

In a direct battle or even a sneak attack, given that their fighting prowess was near equal, he would at least be able to protect himself. But if it was an attack from an enemy disguised as a friend while his guard was down... even he couldn't say for sure whether he would be able to survive it or not.

After a brief moment silence, the Greenleaf King sent a telepathic message over. "I need to recuperate for a moment, but we can't allow that fellow to continue killing our tribesmen like that! You should head out to stop him first, and I will meet up with you once I have recovered. To prevent him from disguising himself as me, why don't we set a password? We will say the passwords when we meet, and if they tally, it can serve to verify our identities. Otherwise... it can only mean that the other party is that fellow in disguise!"

"That is a good idea!" The Goldenleaf King's eyes lit up after hearing those words.

To better save their tribesmen, it would be ineffective and inefficient for them to remain together. But if they were to separate, that fellow could make use of this opportunity to disguise himself as the other to assault them. They needed an effective method to verify they were who they claimed to be.

"Un, you can decide on the password. You will say the first line, and I will return with the next. If I am unable to reply with the password, it can only mean that the fellow is

disguising as me. If so, just sneak up on him and launch a fatal blow!" the Greenleaf King replied telepathically with a grim expression.

"Very well!" The Goldenleaf King nodded. "How about this? I will say 'Slay all master teachers,' and you will reply with 'the Demonic Tribe shall dominate!' If I fail to say the password upon meeting you, you should just head straight up and deal a lethal strike!"

"Alright!" The Greenleaf King nodded.

"It's settled then." The Goldenleaf King heaved a sigh of relief. At that moment, another scream of agony was heard, and he quickly said, "I will head over to take a look. You must be careful!"

"Don't worry. Having fallen for his ploy once, I won't be so foolish as to fall for it once more," the Greenleaf King replied confidently.

The Goldenleaf King nodded before hurriedly leaving.

Arriving at the origin of the scream, he found another dead tribesman, killed in the same brutal method as before.

"No, this won't do. At this rate, our forces will be annihilated. I have to undo the formation as soon as possible." Seeing how the formation was showing no signs of dissipating even after such a long period of time, it could only mean that the other party had plenty of zhenqi reserved.

At this rate, they wouldn't be able to outlast the other party. The Goldenleaf King couldn't help but frown in dilemma.

"Where are you escaping to?" Just as the Goldenleaf King was beginning to devote himself to studying the Beguilement Formation, he suddenly heard a furious roar, and a figure abruptly rushed for him. Raising his gaze, he realized that it was none other than the Greenleaf King.

At the same time, the Greenleaf King also noticed him and hurriedly asked, "Brother Yin, did you see anyone passing by here earlier?"

"I didn't." The Goldenleaf King shook his head as he began to assess the Greenleaf King before him carefully.

This Greenleaf King was completely unharmed, the palm print that had struck his chest was nowhere to be seen. His sharp eyes were gazing at him intently, as if trying to peer through him.

Without any hesitation, the Goldenleaf King immediately sent a telepathic message over. "Slay all master teachers!"

"Indeed, we have to slay all master teachers. There is no doubt now; that fellow is definitely a master teacher. He tried to launch a sneak attack against me earlier, but it's fortunate that I reacted swiftly and dodged his attack!" The Greenleaf King waved his hand and harrumphed coldly.

"At all costs, we must kill that fellow!" Upon hearing the Greenleaf King's response, a sharp glint concealing deep killing intent flashed across the Goldenleaf King's eyes as he slowly walked toward the Greenleaf King.

The Greenleaf King nodded earnestly. "Indeed!"

"That fellow possesses fighting prowess on par with us. The only way we will be able to defeat him is to collaborate with one another. I happen to have something here that might be useful in dealing with that fellow. Here, take a look at it," the Goldenleaf King said as he flicked his wrist and passed a jade token over.

"What is it?" the Greenleaf King glanced at the item in the other party's hand doubtfully.

"It is..."

Seeing that the other party was completely unguarded, a savage glint glowed in the Goldenleaf King's eyes as he roared, "Die!"

The next moment, his fist crushed heavily into the body of the Greenleaf King!

Hong long!

Due to the close proximity and swift strike, by the time the Greenleaf King reacted, the fist was already right in front of his chest.

"Brother Yin, what are you doing?" the Greenleaf King hollered with narrowed eyes as he hurriedly channeled all of the zhenqi in his body to protect his vitals.

"What am I doing? Do you think that this flawed disguise of yours will be able to fool me? Die!"

Boom!

An incomparably powerful fist landed directly on the Greenleaf King. He felt a crushing pressure tearing through his chest before he was sent flying.

Pu!

Fresh blood spurted from his mouth.

Chapter 960

Annihilation

Peng!

The Greenleaf King crashed onto the ground, and his back tore a deep gorge of a dozen meters long on the ground.

Following which, blood spurted from his mouth furiously. His face was as pale as a sheet of paper, as if he had been depleted of his blood and vitality.

He and the Goldenleaf King were cultivators with strength equaling one another. The latter had struck him suddenly with his full might, and even though he had managed to remain alive through channeling his energy at the very last moment, all of his organs had ruptured, leaving him in a state of near death.

At this rate, it was likely that he wouldn't last for too long.

The Greenleaf King clenched his jaws tightly together and howled frenziedly, "Why?"

He and the Goldenleaf King were both Otherworldly Demon Kings. While the both of them didn't have much interaction with one another, they were still comrades undertaking the same important mission for the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. Yet, in face of an enemy, the latter had actually attacked him instead of the enemy. Why?

He just couldn't understand it. At this moment, a voice suddenly shouted, "Why? Because he is the master teacher in disguise! Greenleaf King, kill him! Otherwise, we might both end up losing our lives here!"

Turning around, the Greenleaf King saw another Goldenleaf King standing right behind him. Following which, the second Goldenleaf King charged forward to attack the first Goldenleaf King ferociously with a finger jab.

Hong long!

A pure and concentrated killing intent crushed down on the first Goldenleaf King.

On the other hand, the first Goldenleaf King's face was completely flushed. He opened his mouth several times, seemingly wanting to say something, but his voice just wouldn't come out.

"He is the master teacher in disguise?"

"Indeed! That fellow disguised himself as me so as to conveniently attack the both of us! Help me, I can't hold my ground against him alone!" the second Goldenleaf King roared anxiously as he was pushed back under the retaliation of the first Goldenleaf King.

Upon hearing the explanation and glancing at the two Goldenleaf Kings, how could the Greenleaf King still be ignorant to the situation?

That Zhang Xuan fellow who had saved all of the master teachers was using the same ploy against him once again! How could he have been so foolish as to fall for the same trick twice?

"So that's the case! Damn it..."

Roaring angrily, the Greenleaf King ignited the blood in his body, and in an instant, his withered vitality was abruptly restored. Regaining his strength, he charged at the first Goldenleaf King, who had severely wounded him earlier.

The Otherworldly Demonic Tribe's Blood Ignition Art! Once activated, one would die without fail. But in the short period of time before then, one would obtain strength far beyond one's limits.

Upon seeing the Greenleaf King using that move, the first Goldenleaf King immediately panicked. He quickly shook his head as fear and horror appeared in his eyes.

However, his body had been completely suppressed by the other party's unbelievably pure killing intent, rendering him unable to speak for the moment.

"It's too late for regrets. I will have you know that master teachers aren't the only ones who are unafraid of death. For our ultimate goal, we, the Otherworldly Demons, are willing to give our all as well!" With a determined glint in his eyes, the Greenleaf King's fist crashed down, like a comet from the heavens, upon the first Goldenleaf King with a frenzied roar.

On the other hand, the first Goldenleaf King struggled with all his might, but his body was temporarily immobilized under the powerful suppression of the second Goldenleaf King. Eventually, he wasn't even able to put up any defense against the immensely powerful strike of the Greenleaf King.

Peng!

Struck squarely in his chest, the first Goldenleaf King was sent flying while furiously spurting blood. He crashed heavily onto the ground before blacking out altogether.

It was impossible for him to hold his ground against the simultaneous assault of two equally powerful Kings.

Pu!

After activating the Blood Ignition Art and utilizing his ultimate strike, the Greenleaf King's injuries aggravated further, and a mouthful of blood spurted from his mouth. His body collapsed powerlessly to the ground as he gasped desperate for air, unable to speak a word.

However, there was a hint of a smile in his eyes. He knew full well how mighty his strike was. There was no way the other party could have survived after taking it head-on.

At least he had killed that human principal before his death. His sacrifice was not in vain.

However, in that moment, in his peripheral vision, he caught sight of the first Goldenleaf King struggling desperately to his feet with deep indignation in his eyes, as if unwilling to meet his end just like that. The body of the first Goldenleaf King trembled weakly as he stared at the second Goldenleaf King with a look of disbelief on his face and said, "Y-you... You are that human principal, aren't you?"

At this point, he finally understood everything.

From the moment he saw the second 'him' appear, he had already realized that something had gone really wrong and that he had fallen for that wretch's trap.

From the very start, the very first Greenleaf King he had met was this bastard in disguise while the human he had been fighting against was his ally in disguise. Seeing

the two of them clashing, he had automatically assumed that the Greenleaf King before him was the real one.

The setting of the password was also a scheme of the other party to make him mistake the real Greenleaf King to be a fake!

Naturally, there was no way the real Greenleaf King could have been aware of the password. Thus, when he tried to challenge the latter with the password, the latter had been unable to respond.

After which, when he made his move against the Greenleaf King, that fellow had appeared once more, this time disguised as him, to collaborate with the Greenleaf King against him.

Truly killing two birds with one stone! With just mere words and a Beguilement Formation, he had turned the both of them against one another, becoming the victor of the battle easily!

"Not bad, you are quite sharp after all!" The second Goldenleaf King chuckled as his appearance and physique warped into the form of a twenty-year-old human.

Zhang Xuan!

The two Kings were Saint realm 4-dan experts. Even with twenty Saint realm 3-dan puppets and a grade-7 Beguilement Formation, it would still have been nigh impossible for him to achieve victory.

After all, the Beguilement Formation only messed with one's sense of direction, but it couldn't isolate sound. If he were to attempt to focus his attack on one of the Kings, the ruckus and disturbance in the spiritual energy would surely have drawn the other King in too. He would then have had to face two of them simultaneously, and the only possible conclusion in that situation was defeat.

Thus, the best way was to make them turn against one another.

The Beguilement Formation could confound one's senses, making it impossible for one to perceive one's surroundings clearly. Making use of this advantage, as well his and his clone's ability to disguise themselves, he was able to convince the Goldenleaf King that he was the real Greenleaf King and turn the Goldenleaf King against the real Greenleaf King.

Then, when the Greenleaf King was injured by the Goldenleaf King, the Greenleaf King would naturally think that the latter was him in disguise, especially considering what had happened earlier that day.

It was not that the two Kings were fools, but Zhang Xuan had crafted each situation convincingly, manipulating their current emotions and thoughts to nudge them to act. On top of that, his ability to wield the killing intent unique to Otherworldly Demons and almost perfect disguise made it even more difficult to guard against him. Even the smartest of people could have been easily tricked in the spur of a moment.

"You..." The Greenleaf King's face paled in horror, as if a bolt of lightning had struck him. At this point, seeing the second Goldenleaf King morphing into the form of a human, how could he still not understand what was going on?

The Otherworldly Demonic Tribe had spent an astronomical price to send the both of them over, but before they could even push their forces beyond the Subterranean Gallery, they had turned against one another due to the despicable schemes of the young man before him. The immense frustration he felt at that moment sent another spurt of blood gushing out of his mouth.

"Even if I die, I will bring you down with me!" Roaring furiously with gritted teeth, the Greenleaf King struggled to his feet to launch a decisive blow against Zhang Xuan, but in that instant, an Otherworldly Demon puppet abruptly kicked his head before he could gather his strength.

Peng!

Completely unprepared, his body tumbled forcefully backward on the ground.

That puppet only wielded the strength of Saint realm 3-dan, and under ordinary circumstances, it would not have been a match for him. However, with the severe injuries that he had sustained and the backlash from activating the Blood Ignition Art, he was already completely depleted on the inside, making him powerless to fend against the attack from the Saint realm 3-dan puppet.

Lifting his gaze, he saw another dozen or so Saint realm 3-dan puppets encircling the Goldenleaf King tightly, pummeling the latter viciously, not giving him any chance to activate the Blood Ignition Art at all.

It would have been difficult for them to deal with so many puppets even at their peak,

let alone in their current situation. It didn't take long for the Otherworldly Demon Kings to be gasping weakly for air as they slowly fell into death's embrace.

"You despicable..." the Greenleaf King uttered weakly as he glared ferociously at the young man before his eyes.

To think that he, an Otherworldly Demon King, an existence possessing unparalleled power in his territory, would actually have been toyed with by a twenty-year-old brat like that!

The overwhelming indignation that he felt left him so furious that he felt he might explode on the spot.

Facing the Greenleaf King's rage, Zhang Xuan simply gazed down on the other party coldly, his eyes devoid of any compassion or pity. "Despicable? As one who has committed countless atrocities and feasted on the blood and flesh of humans, do you think that you are in a position to call me despicable?"

As a race who cultivated the Zhenqi of Slaughter and feasted indiscriminately on the blood and flesh of all other intelligent lifeforms to further themselves, it was just a matter of time before justice was brought upon them.

"This is simply survival of the fittest. It is the honor of lowly lifeforms like you humans to be ingested by us!" the Greenleaf King replied coldly.

"Honor?" Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan chuckled coldly. "I see. Since that's the case, why don't I offer you the same honor as well?"

Zhang Xuan raised his hands and commanded, "Beat him to death!"

Roar!

The twenty Otherworldly Demon puppets immediately nodded upon hearing the command and began launching another wave of vicious attacks against the two Kings.

Pilipala!

Three minutes later, the two Kings were lying powerlessly on the ground, devoid of any strength to retaliate anymore.

Not only so, their dantians had been crushed as well, causing the immense strength that they had once harnessed to disappear without a trace.

Gesturing for the puppets to stop, Zhang Xuan stepped forward and asked, "Alright, it's time to come clean about how you managed to bypass the seal and get here, and what your motives are!"

If he wished to kill the two Kings, there would have been no need for him to waste so much effort on them. The reason he had kept them alive was to interrogate them on this.

"You want us to betray our tribesmen? Dream on!" the Greenleaf King spat coldly.

"Our Otherworldly Demonic Tribe doesn't have despicable traitors who would sell out their kind for their own benefit!" the Goldenleaf King roared as well.

After which, a fresh mouthful of blood abruptly spewed from the Goldenleaf King's mouth as his eyes burst apart. Following which, his head slumped weakly to the side, and his body fell completely motionless.

"What?" Astonished, Zhang Xuan quickly turned his gaze toward the Greenleaf King, only to witness the same happening to the latter as well.

"There was probably some kind of lethal poison placed in their teeth, which granted them instant death once activated. It is a countermeasure in case they were captured by the humans," Vicious explained.

Zhang Xuan harrumphed in anger. "If you knew earlier, why didn't you tell me?"

He had just been a step away from possibly acquiring the intelligence he needed, and yet, the two fellows had actually committed suicide before his eyes. How could he possibly not be angry at this situation?

"I only recalled it just a moment ago," Vicious replied awkwardly.

"Forget it!" Sighing deeply, Zhang Xuan waved his hands in exasperation. As frustrating as it was, what was done was done.

Besides, it wasn't guaranteed that he would have been able to pry open the mouths of those two.

After all, those who were dispatched here could only have been the most loyal of the Otherworldly Demons, and it would have been difficult to obtain any crucial information from them.

With his Soul Depth reaching a level equivalent to a 7-star master teacher, Zhang Xuan's Impartation of Heaven's Will was effective even on Spiritual Perception realm experts. However, against a Saint realm 4-dan experts like the other party, not to mention, ones with strong mental fortitude, it was impossible for his Impartation of Heaven's Will to work.

To be honest, even if the two Kings were still alive at this point, the chances to obtain any important information from them was extremely slim.

"Alright. Kill all of the remaining Otherworldly Demons in the formation!" Waving his hand, Zhang Xuan issued an instruction, and the Otherworldly Demon puppets swiftly dispersed in all directions.

Hu!

Zhang Xuan walked up to the two Kings and took off their storage rings.

Immersing his consciousness within the rings, he took a peek at the contents inside.

S-so many treasures?

Upon seeing what was within, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

Chapter 961

Lu Feng and the Master Teachers' Shock

The storage rings of the two Kings could easily qualify as a treasure vault. Putting aside the many powerful weapons and potent pills, there were more than ten thousand high-tier spirit stones within!

Most likely, these are the resources they were given for the mission, Zhang Xuan guessed.

Given that the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe had paid a heavy price to allow two Otherworldly Demon Kings to bypass the seal and enter the Subterranean Gallery, there was no doubt that they were on an important mission. Naturally, the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe would have offered them the best resources so as to ensure that the mission would be successful.

However, it seemed like it had only ended up benefitting him.

Their superiors probably couldn't have imagined that the many subordinates they had dispatched to the Subterranean Gallery would have been wiped out by a mere Nascent Saint lad before they could achieve anything at all.

"Hmm? What is this?" Flicking his wrist, a round platform appeared before his eyes. It was inscribed with innumerable unique runes that bore some resemblance to those he had seen back in the Palace of Runes.

Vicious took a glance at it and said, "This is an altar!"

"Altar? Could this be the artifact the Otherworldly Demons used to transport their tribesmen over?" Zhang Xuan asked doubtfully.

Given the seal their predecessors had left in the depths of the Subterranean Gallery, it should have been impossible for the Otherworldly Demons to appear in the Subterranean Gallery. Yet, not only did they appear, there were so many of them on top of that.

Could it be the effects of this altar?

Vicious took a look at the runes on the altar and said, "That is unlikely. This altar is used for offering tributes to summon certain special items. It has little to do with spatial transportation."

"Summoning certain special items?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

He didn't have much of an understanding of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. After studying the altar for some time, he was still unable to make sense out of it, so he could only return it to his storage ring.

After which, he rummaged through the items in the storage rings once more, and a pile of books appeared before his eyes.

Upon glancing at them, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up. Are these... books on the study of souls?

To his delight, the pile of books before his eyes were all related to the cultivation of souls.

Beyond Spiritual Perception realm, the importance of one's soul became more and more important. As Saint realm 4-dan experts, it was normal for these two to have a handful of books on the topic in their possession.

After collecting them into the Library of Heaven's Path with a glance, Zhang Xuan began to browse through the books.

However, a frown soon emerged on his forehead. Something is wrong here. Didn't the soul oracles pledge loyalty to the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe back then? It follows that the soul cultivation techniques that the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe should be superior to those of mankind... but why are there so many mistakes in here?

Those soul cultivation technique manuals were extremely flawed, each of them having over several thousand mistakes. It was truly a wonder those fellows had managed to cultivate their souls safely.

He had thought that the soul cultivation techniques of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe would be far superior to those he could procure from the Master Teacher Continent, allowing him to advance his soul cultivation further through them.

However, that clearly wasn't the case.

If he were to cultivate using their soul cultivation techniques, even if his cultivation didn't go berserk, it would also be extremely weak, possibly collapsing at any moment.

Zhang Xuan shook his head. Perhaps it is due to humans and the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe being of two different species, so the soul cultivation techniques do not overlap.

This was the only logical explanation he could come up with at the moment.

During the time he spent studying the items within the storage ring, the puppets slew all fifty of the Otherworldly Demons trapped within the formation and returned with their storage rings in hand.

Searching through them, Zhang Xuan gathered quite a few artifacts, spirit stones, and a handful of books regarding souls as well.

After dealing with that, he calmly retracted the Beguilement Formation and had the puppets clear up the corpses of the Otherworldly Demons. After which, he assumed his disguise as the Goldenleaf King and stood on the spot.

There were more than two hundred Otherworldly Demons, and he had only killed fifty of them thus far. There were still another a hundred and fifty or so combing the area. Since Zhang Xuan had begun making his move, he had to make sure to eliminate all of them to be safe.

Standing on the spot, it didn't take long for the Otherworldly Demons to return one by one.

Zhang Xuan had the Saint realm 3-dan puppets lying in wait in the surroundings, and the arriving Otherworldly Demons would be instantly killed and removed from the spot by them. Knowing that these ordinary soldiers couldn't possibly know anything about the secrets concerning the seal, Zhang Xuan couldn't be bothered to interrogate them either.

Within just four hours, the Otherworldly Demon scouting party was completely annihilated.

I should take a look at the seal now...

He had already found out where the seal was located from Lu Feng and the others earlier.

After eradicating all of the Otherworldly Demons, he began making his way toward the seal.

...

Hu!

In a small valley within the Subterranean Gallery, a group of master teachers had removed their Concealment Formation with a sharp glint in their eyes.

They were Lu Feng and the others.

After the past few hours of recuperation, they had recovered most of their strength. There were some severe injuries that they couldn't resolve at the moment yet, but that couldn't be helped.

"Since we have recovered considerably from our injuries, we should head over to help!"

"Indeed, Zhang shi won't be able to deal with so many Otherworldly Demons alone. Even if he does possess some life preservation means, his true strength is still a little too weak. I fear that he might meet with danger!"

"He risked so much in order to save us, so how can we simply watch idly as he braves through a dangerous situation alone?"

"No matter what, we should head over to take a look first!"

...

The master teacher stood up with a resolute gaze in their eyes.

Zhang shi had willingly gotten himself in deep trouble in order to save them, not giving up on them despite the trouble they had caused him. How could they simply sit still, knowing that he was in a perilous situation?

Seeing that everyone shared the same opinion, Lu Feng said, "Since that's the case,

let's go look for him together."

Even though he wasn't the eldest master teacher amid the group, he had the highest standing and strongest cultivation. On top of that, he was an old acquaintance of Zhang shi, so naturally, he had the greatest say as well.

"Alright!"

The crowd nodded as they took out their weapons and began making their way over to the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe's base.

The further they flew, the stranger they found the situation to be. Eventually, a master teacher couldn't help but ask, "Weird, why is there no movement at all? Furthermore, did you all notice that the killing intent in the area seems to have thinned?"

Each of them had been in the Subterranean Gallery for at least two months, so they had gained some understanding of its layout. The killing intent within the Subterranean Gallery was known to be particularly concentrated in this area, creating a constant, heavy pressure on them.

However, that pressure seemed to have weakened considerably, to the point where they could hardly feel it anymore.

And more importantly, if Zhang shi had truly gone to eradicate the Otherworldly Demons in the area... how could there be no movement at all? Not a single Otherworldly Demon, who were supposed to be combing the area for them, was in sight.

A slightly older master teacher of the group said, "There is something peculiar with the situation. Everyone, remain on guard!"

The others nodded in response as they group carried on.

Not too long later, they arrived at the base constructed by the Otherworldly Demons.

They had tried to scout it on numerous occasions, but each time, they would either be discovered or fall to its formation. Over the past two years, there were at least ten of their comrades who had died due to it.

But at this very moment... there was not a person to be seen. More importantly, the

grand buildings, which had once stood tall, had been reduced to rubble.

"These buildings..."

Everyone was dumbstruck.

Scattering to comb the area for clues, a master teacher suddenly shouted, "Come over, look! What is this?"

Hearing his shout, the others hurriedly rushed over as well.

On the ground before that master teacher was a puddle of blood that carried overwhelming killing intent, completely different from the blood of a human.

Lu Feng walked over and sliced the ground beneath the puddle of blood lightly with his finger.

Huala!

A bunch of corpses that were hidden in the ground came into appearance. Stacked on top of one another, there were more than two hundred on them. To the astonishment of the master teachers, even the strongest two Kings were among them.

"T-this... they are all dead?"

"Could it be that... Zhang shi actually killed all of them?"

"How could that be possible? More than two hundred Saint realm 1-dan and two Saint realm 4-dan Otherworldly Demons... Even if all of the elders of the Master Teacher Academy were brought here, there is no guarantee that we could win. For a person to do it all alone..."

...

Everyone was bewildered by the sight before their eyes.

Having fought with the Otherworldly Demons on multiple occasions, they knew full well how powerful they were. Even with the entire force of Hongyuan Empire combined, it would be difficult to achieve a victory against them. Yet, for Zhang shi to have annihilated them singlehandedly... and within such a short period of time at

that...

How did he do it?

"I can now confirm that he is indubitably Zhang Xuan; only he is capable of pulling off such inconceivable feats that others dare not even imagine," Lu Feng said with a bitter smile.

If he had still harbored some doubts before, the sight before his eyes had vanquished all of them.

He couldn't imagine anyone else in the world who could pull off such an unbelievable deed other than that unfathomable young man.

With just a Perfect Harmonization to Ethereal Treading realm cultivation back then, he had been able to raise a huge ruckus in the Master Teacher Academy, unimpeded by anyone. Considering that he had already reached Half-Saint pinnacle at this point in time, it went without saying that those Otherworldly Demons couldn't have been a match for him.

"Slaying so many Otherworldly Demons and foiling their ploy... the contribution he has earned from this deed is tremendous! We have to report this matter to the headquarters swiftly so that Zhang Shi's deeds will not be buried," a master teacher said.

"Indeed!" The others nodded in agreement.

Protecting mankind from the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe wasn't an individual's responsibility but the collective responsibility of the entire human race.

A person who had killed so many Otherworldly Demons and foiled their plot would surely be generously rewarded by the headquarters. There was no one who could refute that.

It was based on such impartiality that the Master Teacher Pavilion had been able to operate for several ten thousand years without its reputation being sullied.

Lu Feng nodded. "Alright, I will report the matter then."

...

While the master teachers were intending to report Zhang Xuan's contribution to the headquarters, the person in question finally halted his footsteps.

He had arrived at the very end of the Subterranean Gallery, where the barrier that severed the connection between the otherworldly battlefield and the Master Teacher Continent was located.

From a distance away, one could see that it was a vast light barrier that stretched for several hundred kilometers, sealing the entire path, blurring whatever was on the opposite end.

But walking up to the barrier, Zhang Xuan could still feel concentrated killing intent spilling forth from the other side from time to time, seemingly trying to rip apart everything.

The cold aura within the Subterranean Gallery had probably come to be after innumerable years of such killing intent spilling over.

This is the seal? Examining the light barrier before him, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but narrow his eyes in astonishment.

It was even more formidable and sturdier than he had thought. For one of his strength, his attacks wouldn't even leave a mark on it.

Such a powerful seal, how did the Otherworldly Demons and the Greenleaf King bypass it? Zhang Xuan couldn't help but be perplexed.

He could still have understood it if the seal was worn out or damaged, but the seal before him felt powerful and wholesome. In other words, it wasn't damaged at all! How did the Otherworldly Demons manage to bypass it under such circumstances?

Baffled, Zhang Xuan willed in his mind, Flaws!

Chapter 962

Second Group from the Combat Master Hall Arrives!

Hu!

A book materialized in the Library of Heaven's Path.

The seal had been whirring in action all along to fend off the killing intent from the otherworldly battlefield, so the Library of Heaven's Path was able to peer into its flaws easily.

Flipping open the book, the knowledge contained within swiftly flowed into Zhang Xuan's mind.

The seal had been created by an expert known as Qiu Wu. Possessing an extremely deep understanding of space, Qiu Wu had designed the seal to sever the space between the two worlds, making it impossible for anyone to breach. Even a 9-star master teacher would find it extremely difficult to destroy the seal.

This was also the reason it had been able to fend off the Otherworldly Demons for so many years.

But nothing could last forever. Even a seal as formidable as that would be worn out over tens of thousands of years. On top of that, the Otherworldly Demons had been striking it relentlessly over the years, whittling it down bit by bit. As a result, there were several weakened areas on the seal.

Even so, not just anyone would be able to cross these areas easily. To order to pass, one would have to pay an extremely heavy price.

With the knowledge Zhang Xuan possessed, however, he was unable to tell what that price was.

There is only one way to stop the Otherworldly Demons from coming over and resolve

the threat once and for all—repairing the weakened areas and make them whole again.

After studying the content of the book, Zhang Xuan lowered his head in deep thought.

Through the Library of Heaven's Path, he knew that even if he had killed the Otherworldly Demons who had bypassed the barrier for the time being, the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe would still be able to send more of their kind in by paying the price.

There would be no end to this.

The only way to resolve the problem for good was to repair the weakened areas.

If it had been anyone else, they would have been helpless, even if they knew the root of the problem.

However, Zhang Xuan was different. The flaws of the seal were reflected clearly in the Library of Heaven's Path. As long as he worked backward from the flaws, he could easily deduce the method to repairing the seal. However... the amount of zhenqi required for this operation would be immense.

Even as a Nascent Saint pinnacle expert who had cultivated the Saint Ascension Decipher, the rich zhenqi he harnessed within his body was insufficient to repair the seal within a short period of time.

Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before making his decision. Forget it. Since Mu shi and the others have made this request of me, I should resolve it once and for all before heading up. This is for the welfare of mankind, too.

After staying at Hongyuan Empire for four months, he had already come to bear deep feelings for it. On top of that, this was the home of the countless members of his Xuanxuan Faction. If he were to leave and the Otherworldly Demons were to breach the seal once again, it would be hard to say if they would be lucky to have this situation resolved so simply as it had been this time around.

Since he was already there, he ought to make sure that he weeded out the problem at its root.

Time to begin!

Having made up his mind, Zhang Xuan quickly leaped into action. He walked up to the seal and lightly placed his palm on an area where a flaw of the seal was located.

Hu!

In the next moment, with an abrupt jolt, his body entered the seal.

This...

Looking at his surroundings, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in excitement.

This seal was an extremely skillful manipulation of space. This was also the reason it was able to sever the connection between the Master Teacher Continent and the otherworldly battlefield.

Intending to only repair the flaws, Zhang Xuan hadn't thought that he would get to peer into the internal structure of the entire seal from within.

The structure of the seal was built in a manner that was aligned with the laws of space, reinforcing and stabilizing it further.

It bears a striking resemblance to the Saint Ascension Decipher.

Studying the internal structure with his Eye of Insight for a moment, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but clench his fists in excitement.

To his astonishment, the layout of the seal, when studied carefully, bore an uncanny resemblance to the Saint Ascension Decipher, which he was cultivating at the moment, to the point where it could be said to be nearly identical. However, the structure in the seal was a little more complex, and this enhanced complexity allowed the decipherers to be tied together in an even more compact manner.

A thought emerged in Zhang Xuan's mind. If I cultivate the Saint Ascension Decipher according to this format, will it become stronger?

There was no apparent flaw in his Saint Ascension Decipher, but it wasn't as grand and profound as the structure he was seeing before his eyes. If he were to alter his Saint Ascension Decipher according to this, would it become even stronger?

I should give it a try!

Zhang Xuan began to make some calculations to determine the feasibility of the matter, and after confirming that there was no problem with it, he began to multitask. He used his zhenqi to further reinforce the weakened portions of the seal, while at the same time, sitting quietly on the floor to cultivate.

Under the discerning glint of the Eye of Insight, the intricacies of the seal's internal structure appeared clearly before Zhang Xuan's eyes. Slowly, he turned his attention to his dantian and began rearranging the deciphers that he had constructed before. He didn't make any progress in his cultivation, but his Origin Core did become significantly more stable and stronger.

...

While Zhang Xuan was cultivating in the Subterranean Gallery without any regard for time, the crowd that was guarding outside the Mausoleum of Principals was becoming more and more anxious by the moment.

"It has already been three days, why isn't Principal Zhang out yet?" School Head Mo asked as he paced around the area anxiously.

"Could it be that something has happened inside?" Zhao Bingxu asked.

School Head Mo hesitated for a moment before saying, "The Mausoleum of Principals is the ground where the preceding principals of our academy rest. Considering that Principal Zhang has gained the recognition of all our preceding principals, there shouldn't be a problem."

But despite the words he spoke, he still couldn't help but feel worried and unnerved within.

He had checked through the records, and it was said that the preceding principals would usually only spend a day in the Mausoleum of Principals. For their principal to spend three days inside... could something have gone wrong?

"Cough cough, I am not worried that something will happen to our principal, but that... he might cause something in the Mausoleum of Principals that might cause the many predecessors... to be unable to rest in peace!" Zhao Bingxu replied with the corners of his mouth twitching.

"Ah..." School Head Mo fell into a daze.

Their current principal was a formidable young man, and he would have been perfect if not for his tendency to... be reckless at times. If their principal were to cause a devastating ruckus in the Mausoleum of Principals, how would they answer the many predecessors before them?

School Head Mo rubbed his glabella as he said with uncertainty, "We can't interfere in what Principal Zhang does... In any case, he is the man who has received the approval of the wills of the preceding principals, so... he shouldn't mess around there."

There was nothing they could do about the situation at the moment, especially since they couldn't enter the Mausoleum of Principals in the first place. Even if they knew that something bad could very well happen, the most they could do at the moment was pray for the best.

At this moment, Zhao Bingxu suddenly recalled something and asked, "Oh right, the men from the Combat Master Hall should have arrived by now, right?"

"Combat Master Zhuo did say that the combat masters that will be assessing Zheng Yang and the others would be arriving in three days' time back then, and it should be about time now. Let's head over to take a look!"

"Un."

Thus, the two school heads took one final hesitant glance at the Mausoleum of Principals before heading off to the Elder Hall.

It was one thing if their principal wasn't around to welcome the arrival of the representatives of the Combat Master Hall, but if even they weren't around either, it would be a huge breach of etiquette on the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy's part.

...

Outside the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, an aerial saint beast descended from the sky, and around a dozen cultivators began walking into the academy. They were dressed not in the robes of a master teacher or a combat master but ordinary clothes.

"Liao shi, I heard that Zhuo shi and the others came over to conduct the selection, but they ended up being utterly defeated by Hongyuan's candidates. May I know if that is true?" a Chrysalis realm combat master walking in the middle of the group asked.

"Un, that is indeed the news that we have received. It seems like Hongyuan's candidates this year are exceptionally powerful. There is even one candidate who Combat Master Zhuo was unable to stand against when his cultivation was equal to the other's! This is why he requested that we rush here to assess the candidate," the middle-aged man at the forefront of the group replied with a nod.

That middle-aged man looked like he was in his mid-forties, and he exuded a vague but unfathomable aura, reminiscent of a majestic dragon lying dormant in wait. Just like Combat Master Zhuo, he was a Saint realm 2-dan expert as well.

But while the two possessed equal cultivation, the middle-aged man commanded an aura that felt far more powerful and fearsome than Combat Master Zhuo.

Thousand Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall, Liao Song!

The Chrysalis realm combat master harrumphed in disbelief. "I have checked the history of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, and it has always been at the very bottom of the Four Great Master Teacher Academies. There were hardly any talents among them that met the requirement of the Combat Master Hall, so how could their candidates suddenly grow so strong as to defeat our combat masters? Something feels amiss about the situation."

Another young man nodded in agreement. "I also think that there is something weird about the situation."

Of the combat masters behind Liao Song, three of them were at the Ethereal Treading realm, three of them were at the Chrysalis realm, three of them were at Half-Saint, and three of them were at Nascent- Saint; altogether, there were twelve of them.

Each of these men were extremely strong. Their presence in itself carried a sharp edge that few would dare approach.

It felt like each of them would be equal to Combat Master Zhuo were they to fight at the same cultivation realm.

These young men were all Hundred Men Commanders of the Combat Master Hall!

The Combat Master Hall ranked its members not by their cultivation but by their ability to display strength beyond their current cultivation.

Zhuo Qingfeng might have reached Spiritual Perception realm, but he was still only a Hundred Men Commander, possessing equal standing to these young men and a rank lower than Liao Song.

"I also find that hard to believe. Our combat masters are all top-notch geniuses sieved out from countless cultivators, and yet, all one hundred candidates chosen by an academy actually managed to clear the harsh selection? This is something unprecedented in the history of the Combat Master Hall! The reason I came here today is to verify this matter as well!" Liao Song said with a deep frown on his forehead.

Honestly speaking, he also found it hard to believe the news that Combat Master Zhuo had sent to him.

The Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy was a weak institution that only had a candidate or two clearing each Master Teacher Selection. Yet, for a hundred people over the five grades to all clear the selection in this year... This notion in itself was inconceivable!

The others nodded in agreement.

While they were speaking, the group entered the academy. Raising their gazes, they saw innumerable students walking about with a spirited look in their eyes.

"Ruohuan, I am still a little unsure about the maneuver that Principal Zhang lectured us on. Can you explain it to me?"

On the training grounds alongside the pavement, a few students were gathered together in a group, seemingly conversing about their insights and learning from one another.

"It's simple... Watch closely!"

The young man named Ruohuan chuckled softly before raising his palm and abruptly striking forward.

Huala!

A series of sonic booms resounded deafeningly in the air as a gush of hot air currents blasted into the surroundings. Under the immense pressure of the air currents, the bluestone pavement beneath the feet of the student began to crack.

"What a powerful palm strike!"

The combat masters couldn't help but stop and narrow their eyes in astonishment.

The palm strike seemed simple, but it took incredible skill in order to bring forth its strength to such an extent. They would have struggled to execute a palm strike of this caliber back when they were at the young man's cultivation realm.

"Could this be the fellow who intends to participate in the selection?" one of the young men amid the combat masters asked.

Even though the fellow on the stage was only at the Cosmos Bridge realm, the prowess he had exerted in that previous blow was definitely on par with a Hundred Men Commander. Most likely, he was the genius whom Combat Master Zhuo had spoken about.

"That seems very likely. Liao shi, I hope to challenge him to a duel!" one of the combat masters said.

After a moment of hesitation, Liao Song nodded and instructed, "Alright. However, make sure to go easy on him. If the other party is not the person in question and you end up severely injuring him, it will cause a great deal of trouble if Hongyuan report this matter to the headquarters."

Every single combat master was a top-notch combat genius, and naturally, ordinary master teachers were no match for them at all. If they were to go too far and injure the other party, the headquarters could punish them for abusing their strength.

"Don't worry, I will be careful!" The young man smiled before leaped onto the training ground not too far away.

"This friend over here, my name is Zhou Ye. I saw your palm strike earlier, and I am impressed by its might. If it isn't too much, I would like to have a spar with you. Of course, I will suppress my cultivation to Cosmos Bridge realm for the spar," the young man, Ye Zhou, said with a smile.

Chapter 963

We Are from the Xuanxuan Faction

Sparring was not uncommon in the Master Teacher Academies. Frequently, there would be master teachers, who after receiving some inspiration or learning a new battle technique, would challenge a master teacher stronger than them so as to test out their skills and see where they stood.

Facing the challenge from Zhou Ye, the young man named Ruohuan was taken aback for a moment before replying with a slight smile, "I am more than willing to."

Nodding, Zhou Ye took a deep breath as he began suppressing his zhenqi. It didn't take long for his cultivation to reach Cosmos Bridge realm, the same as the opponent before him.

Zhou Ye smiled. "It seems like that you are skilled in palm strikes, so I won't use a weapon either. Alright, let's begin!"

After which, he flicked his wrist and charged forward with astounding speed.

Despite having suppressed his cultivation to Cosmos Bridge realm, Zhou Ye's movements were incredibly nimble, as if a specter flitting across the battlefield. It was difficult for his enemy to determine exactly where he would strike.

"Not bad!"

Ruohuan's eyes lit up in excitement. He raised his palm and adeptly struck the area right in front of him.

Principal Zhang had once said, if a cultivator panicked before a complex or foreign maneuver, he would be falling into his opponent's trap. He would swiftly be pulled into his opponent's momentum, and it would be extremely hard to turn the tables against his opponent by then.

As such, against moves consisting of many feints, one had to study it closely to peer right into its essence. No matter how complicated the opponent's moves were, there

was a limited number of directions in which the opponent could strike from. The best way for one to deal with such a situation was to wait and adapt accordingly.

"Not bad!" Seeing that the other party didn't make a reckless move out of panic, Zhou Ye's eyes lit up in admiration.

Just as the other party had thought, the motive of his move was to lure the other party into action. As soon as the other party moved, he would immediately find the flaw in the other party's movement and strike at it.

Facing Ruohuan's palm strike, Zhou Ye maneuvered nimbly to the other party's side and thrust his palm forward.

He thought that as long as he exerted sufficient strength in this strike, he would be able to force the other party to admit defeat. However, before his palm could land, he suddenly felt a stifling sensation on his chest.

Narrowing his eyes in alarm, it was only in this instant that he realized the other party had already seen through his maneuver and placed a palm right in his path!

In other words, the other party's initial strike had just been a feint to lure him in. As soon as he appeared to make his strike, the other party swiftly launched an assault with the other palm.

Peng!

At this point, it was already too late to dodge. An immense pressure struck his chest and sent him flying from the training ground before crashing onto the street.

"He subdued Zhou Ye in a single strike?"

"Could that man really be the person we are going to assess?"

"That is likely to be the case. Otherwise, how could he wield such great power?"

The group from the Combat Master Hall leaped in shock at that sight.

Liao Song's eyebrows also shot up in astonishment.

He could easily tell from the previous battle that the fellow named Ruohuan was

weaker than Zhou Ye in terms of zhenqi strength and reaction speed, but Ruohuan had still managed to easily achieve a victory against Zhou Ye. This showed that he possessed exceptional talent in the field of combat.

Most likely, Ruohuan was the genius that Zhuo Qingfeng had spoken of.

Otherwise, how could he be so powerful?"

At this point, Liao Song pondered for a moment before raising his hand and gesturing. "Hu Chen, go up and test him!"

To confirm the matter, he would have to continue assessing the other party.

"Alright!" Hu Chen nodded before leaping onto the training ground.

"I am awed by your profound moves, so I would like to spar with you as well!"

After saying those words, Hu Chen began suppressing his cultivation.

"Fine by me!"

Nodding, Ruohuan was just about to begin the fight when the young man beside him suddenly stepped forward and said, "Ruohuan, it is rare for us to have such easy opponents to practice with. Will you let me fight him instead? After all, I am the weakest of our group, and even after so long, I am still unable to fully comprehend the essence of Principal Zhang's lecture. This is a good opportunity for me to try my hand!"

Hearing his close friend saying such words, Ruohuan smiled bitterly before nodding in agreement. "Alright then!"

Due to his lacking aptitude for combat, this close friend of his had been lagging behind the others. Due to the power gap between him and the other students, it was hard for him to learn anything in a battle against the others. Perhaps, if he could try his hand against this weakling who had come out of nowhere, he might receive an epiphany that could enhance his comprehension of combat.

Naturally, Ruohuan was the person who had come to the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy along with Zhang Xuan from the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, Ruohuan gongzi. After training diligently recently, he had managed to advance his cultivation to Cosmos Bridge realm.

Having journeyed with Zhang Xuan from back when they were still in Myriad Kingdom Alliance, he had received Zhang Xuan's guidance on multiple occasions, and this had helped to gain a deep comprehension of combat. On top of that, as one of the founders of the Xuanxuan Faction, he felt the dire need to work harder than anyone, or else he could very well be overtaken by others swiftly. Due to the great effort he had put in, he had managed to make tremendous progress in his eye of discernment and fighting prowess within this period of time.

In his view, these opponents who had popped out of nowhere weren't exactly weak, and their maneuvers were innovative and profound as well, but compared to the insights that Principal Zhang had imparted to them, there was nothing to fear from them.

What Principal Zhang had imparted to them was the foundation of combat, and no matter how grand or majestic a battle technique was, they were built on this very foundation. Ultimately, battle techniques were means to attack another, and as long as there was movement, there would surely be flaws that one could exploit!

Ruohuan felt that his close friend had everything he needed to achieve a victory, all he needed was to internalize Principal Zhang's teachings during combat.

"Easy opponents?" Hearing the conversation between the duo, Hu Chen nearly exploded out of sheer rage.

Pal, open your eyes and take a close look! I am a Chrysalis realm combat master! I am suppressing my cultivation to battle with you! Yet, you said that I am an easy opponent...

He wasn't the only who felt that way. The other combat masters also nearly spurted blood after hearing those words. They had always been existences whose fighting prowess far exceeded their opponents. This was their very first time being looked down on by another like that.

A combat master who couldn't hold back his rage anymore sent a telepathic message over. "Hu Chen, don't go easy on him!"

"I understand!" Hu Chen replied as a savage glint flashed across his eyes.

He had been thinking that he would hold back a little if the other party couldn't cope so as to spare his dignity. But since the other party was acting so arrogantly, he didn't

mind teaching him a harsh lesson.

"Let's begin!" Hu Chen said as he beckoned his opponent.

"Un." The young man on the opposite side nodded before stepping forward. "Principal Zhang has lectured us on the various combat techniques in dealing with certain situations, but I am a little slow on the uptake, so... if I accidentally injure you later on, I hope that you can forgive me."

"Cut with the nonsense, come!" Unable to take the nonsense his opponent was spouting, Hu Chen pushed his feet against the ground and charged forward as he got into the stance to launch a palm strike.

His movements were large and forceful, giving an impression that he could overwhelm anything in the world.

Seeing Hu Chen's move, the young man didn't flinch in fear. On the contrary, his eyes lit up as he yelled, "Good move!"

After saying those words, under the shocked gazes of the crowd, he charged forward and faced Hu Chen directly with a fist.

Boom!

The fist and the palm collided, and Hu Chen suddenly felt a numbing sensation engulfing his arm before a massive force came crashing down on him with incredible momentum. Unable to withstand the massive force, his face reddened, and he was knocked flying.

Peng!

Just like the previous Zhou Ye, he tumbled across the training ground before his head was planted into the earth.

If Hu Chen hadn't used his full might, the backlash could have been considerably weaker, and he would have suffered less severe injuries. However, with both sides going at full force against one another, Hu Chen's arm ended up being severely injured under the immense pressure from both ends. In his current state, it would be impossible for him to use his arm for the next five days at the very least.

"This..."

"In a direct clash of strength, Hu Chen wasn't a match for him?"

The combat masters were stunned.

Liao Song's mouth began twitching as well.

He had seen with his own eyes how Ruohuan's zhenqi strength was far beneath that of his subordinate. Yet, the person who had sought him for guidance had actually sent Hu Chen flying with a single fist. This was way too incredulous!

Just as the crowd was perplexed by the bewildering sight that had occurred, on the stage, Ruohuan suddenly shook his head in disappointment and began lecturing the young man before him. "Didn't Principal Zhang emphasize that a battle isn't all about brute force? Technique, you need technique! How can you be so dimwitted?"

Ruohuan gongzi was indeed very angry. That fellow had grasped the physical body cultivation technique and zhenqi condensing method imparted by Principal Zhang, but he had failed to comprehend the more important combat techniques. Precisely due to this, he lost every single battle against others. It wasn't easy for them to find a person with a weak understanding of combat techniques for him to practice on, but... that fellow had still resorted to mere brute strength in the end! How could he be so dumb?

"I..." The young man scratched his head awkwardly. "I saw him rushing straight at me, so I couldn't hold myself back, and... this just happened!"

After which, he turned his gaze to the combat masters and asked, "Do any of you want to battle with me? I promise that I won't crush you with brute force this time around."

"You..."

Hearing the young man's words, the combat masters felt so enraged that they could lose their minds.

This was the first time that someone had dared say that he wouldn't crush them with brute force...

Arrogant, he was being way too arrogant!

"Allow me..."

Unable to tolerate this humiliation, another combat master stood forth. It was the last Chrysalis realm cultivator of the group.

The combat master swiftly suppressed his cultivation before beckoning with his hand. "Come!"

"Alright!"

The young man nodded, but just as he was about to make his move, another student by the side suddenly uttered in displeasure, "Zhao Qing, are you planning to hog them all for yourself? This is a rare opportunity to practice, so how can you be so selfish as to keep them all for yourself?"

"I..." The young man scratched his head in embarrassment.

"Enough. These friends over here aren't too weak, and opportunities to spar with others don't come easily. Zhao Qing, you should step down and let Song Ying have a go!" Ruohuan said.

The young man, Zhao Qing, glanced at the combat master in front of him with a look of disappointment before reluctantly nodding. "Alright..."

"You..."

At this point, the combat masters were already nearly on the verge of tears.

What do you mean by not too weak?

We are strong, alright?

Just that... Looking at their two fallen companions, they couldn't help but feel incredibly stifled within.

For them to have been defeated so easily... Could they really still be considered strong?

In the view of such powerful opponents, perhaps they were indeed only worthy of being 'not too weak'!

Clenching his jaws tightly in anger, the combat master said, "Cut the crap, come!"

Walking onto the training ground, Song Ying took a look at his opponent before shaking his head in disappointment. "A perturbed mind, how can you fight in such a state?"

"You..." The combat master was provoked by Song Ying's words, but he also knew that he had indeed allowed rage to cloud his mind, and he wouldn't be able to display the full extent of his fighting prowess in this state. Thus, taking a deep breath, he suppressed the emotions deep in his heart before looking at his opponent once more. "Let's begin!"

On the other hand, seeing his opponent suppressing his emotions so quickly, Song Ying was awed for a moment before nodding. "Alright."

After which, he stepped off forcefully from the ground and charged forward.

Peng peng peng peng!

The duo began their clash.

On the third blow, Song Ying managed to exploit a flaw in the combat master's movements and sent a forceful kick in.

With a reddened face, the combat master was sent flying before crashing onto the ground.

"This..."

Seeing how three of their members were no match for the Hongyuan academy's students, the combat masters couldn't help but glance at one another, flabbergasted.

They had thought that Zhuo Qingfeng had exaggerated the strength of Hongyuan's candidates, making them out to be more fearsome than they were. However, after seeing them with their own eyes, they had no choice but to admit that Hongyuan's students were indeed formidable.

One of the combat masters couldn't resist asking, "Could you be the ones who will be participating in the Combat Master Selection later on, Zheng Yang, Liu Yang, and the others?"

"Zheng Yang? Liu Yang?"

Hearing those words, Ruohuan gongzi shook his head and said, "They are Principal Zhang's direct disciples, and they are at least a hundredfold stronger than the rest of us. How can we possibly be them?"

"You aren't? Then... could you all be among the hundred candidates who have cleared the Combat Master Selection this year?" Liao Song asked.

"Amongst the hundred candidates?" Ruohuan gongzi shook his once more after hearing those words. "We are too weak, so we were unqualified to participate in the Combat Master Selection."

Unqualified to participate in the Combat Master Selection?

Liao Song's body staggered as a stifling sensation struck his chest. "Then, you are..."

"We are from the Xuanxuan Faction!" Ruohuan gongzi replied earnestly, looking straight at the combat masters.

"Our strength is nothing much. There are at least thirty thousand other members within the faction who possess fighting prowess on par with us!"

Chapter 964

Progeny of Combat

"Nothing much?"

"There are at least thirty thousand other members who possess fighting prowess on par with you?"

The combat masters stared at one another, and they could each see the mental breakdown the others were suffering through their eyes.

They had arrived proudly as invigilators, thinking that they were the pinnacle of fighting prowess in their respective cultivation realms. Yet, before they could even meet the talent they were supposed to assess, they were defeated by just a few students playing by the roadside!

Must reality come crushing down on them so heavily like a sledgehammer?

More importantly, it was one thing if there were only one or two of such experts throughout the entire academy. However, according to the other party, this Xuanxuan Faction or something had thirty thousand people possessing such strength.

In that moment, Liao Song could only feel his entire mind blanking out, unable to comprehend the meaning of those words.

Despite being a Thousand Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall, he felt like Granny Liu paying a visit to the Grand View Gardens 1

. He couldn't help but doubt everything that he thought he knew, and even life itself!

"What, you don't believe me?" Seeing the shocked expression on everyone's faces, Ruohuan suddenly chuckled softly, and he gestured behind him. "It happens that the members of our Xuanxuan Faction have gathered over there. Why don't I take you over to have a look?"

"Gathered?"

"Un. Follow me!" Nodding, Ruohuan gongzi beckoned the group to follow him.

Liao Song and the others exchanged glances with one another before hurriedly following behind him.

Not too long later, they saw a huge group of people gathered in a massive square in front of them. They were gathered in groups, seemingly discussing something. From time to time, a couple of people would spar with one another.

"Is that the fundamental fist art, Flood of the Grand River? Isn't it an extremely weak battle technique severely lacking in strength? How did they manage to draw so much power from it?"

"That is the Fallen Gale Sword Art, a Spirit intermediate-tier battle technique! I once attempted to cultivate that technique, but due to the excessive complexity of the move and the limited prowess one can exert through it, I eventually gave up on it. Why does it seem to possess prowess comparable to a Spirit high-tier battle technique in his hands?"

"That fist art and movement art over there might be simple, but they are aligned with the very essence of combat itself, making it extremely hard to guard against it. Even I would find it hard to withstand it if an opponent were to use such a powerful move against me in a battle!"

"What is that move? Wait, aren't those just a few basic maneuvers being chained together? Is it really possible to draw strength comparable to a Spirit high-tier battle technique just like that?"

...

Upon seeing the offense and defense of the various sparring students, the cheeks of the combat masters began twitching uncontrollably.

They hadn't fought any of the students here yet, but through their eyes of discernment, they could tell that they would wield fighting prowess on par with that Ruohuan person in a real battle.

In other words, if their group were to be thrown amid the thirty thousand students gathered here, not only would they not stand out, they would even be among the very bottom of the group!

Just what in the world was going on?

They were combat masters, top-notch combat experts sieved out from countless other master teachers and cultivators!

Unable to hold himself back anymore, Liao Song turned to Ruohuan gongzi and asked, "How did you gain such incredible fighting prowess?"

"At the start, we were also just ordinary students. It was only after going through an entire afternoon of lectures from Principal Zhang that we gained such strength!" Upon speaking of Principal Zhang, Ruohuan gongzi's eyes began gleaming with excitement and respect.

He could still remember the exhilaration he had felt when he listened to Principal Zhang's teachings. During those lectures, he knew that if he could internalize everything that Principal Zhang was imparting to them, his fighting prowess would advance by leaps and bounds.

It was as if the cultivators in the world could be divided into two categories—those who had listened to Principal Zhang's lecture and those who hadn't—and a huge, unbreachable rift stood between the two groups.

This was precisely the reason countless students had knocked on the doors of the Xuanxuan Faction over the past few days, hoping to join the faction. However, so as to not undermine the academy through the faction, the faction had chosen to limit its numbers, and that had left countless extremely regretful that they hadn't joined back when they had been given the chance to do so.

"An entire afternoon of lectures?" Liao Song was stunned.

A mere afternoon of lectures was sufficient to make your fighting prowess rise to such an unbelievable extent? Are you joking with me?

If one's fighting prowess could be raised so easily, doesn't that mean that the unimaginable suffering that we, combat masters, have been put through day after day has been in vain?

"Indeed." Ruohuan gongzi sighed in lamentation. "However, it is a pity that Principal Zhang is an extremely busy man. Otherwise, if he were to just hold a few more lectures, our fighting prowess would surely be much stronger than it is now."

"Much stronger?" Liao Song's mouth began twitching once more.

This group of students was already so powerful that even they, combat masters, were no match for them. If they were to get even stronger... that would be unthinkable!

If so, wouldn't the existence of combat masters become redundant?

While Liao Song was still feeling incredibly stifled within, Ruohuan gongzi suddenly asked, "Right, who are you? Why did you come to the academy?"

"We... we are... We came to find Combat Master Zhuo!"

Liao Song had intended to say that they were combat masters, but in the end, he swallowed those words.

"So, you are Combat Master Zhuo's friends! Give me a moment, I will have someone show you to him." Coming to a realization, Ruohuan gongzi beckoned for a faction member over and instructed him to lead Liao Song and the others to Zhuo Qingfeng's accommodation.

"Thank you!" Liao Song said before hurriedly leaving with his group, fearing that the morale would take another fatal blow if they were to remain there for a moment longer.

Shortly after Liao Song and the others left, a student walked up and asked doubtfully, "Ruohuan, who are these people?"

"I am not too sure either. I thought that they were combat masters initially, but after fighting with them, I am certain that isn't the case. After all, how could combat masters, who devote their time and effort to furthering their combat ability, be so lacking in terms of combat sense? Forget it! As long as they aren't combat masters, we can try to recruit them into the Xuanxuan Faction. I can tell that they are rather talented. If we train them for a few days, they could very well become a powerful addition to our group!" Ruohuan gongzi replied.

"Our Xuanxuan Faction is currently only taking in talents. If they wish to join, we should put them through the examination first before deciding whether to accept them or not. If they can't even clear the examination, they are clearly unqualified to become esteemed members of our faction," the other student sneered.

"That goes without saying. Our Xuanxuan Faction chooses its members very carefully. Their fighting prowess is still decent, but they seem to be a little lacking to clear our examination," Ruohuan gongzi said proudly.

...

As the group of combat masters followed behind the member of the Xuanxuan Faction, one of the combat masters couldn't help but turn to Liao Song and ask, "Liao shi, how are those fellows so powerful?"

"I have no idea," Liao Song replied with a deep frown.

All along, he had thought that combat masters were the representation of the strongest fighting force in their respective cultivation realms. But after meeting the members of the Xuanxuan Faction, this long-established belief that he had held onto for many years had suddenly come crashing down!

After a moment's silence, Liao Song remarked deeply, "It is no wonder Zhuo Qingfeng had us come here. There is truly something peculiar about this Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy."

Even a few passers-by they had met on the street was capable of utterly overpowering them, leaving them incapable of retaliating at all. It was fortunate that they weren't enemies, or else they might just have met their end there.

"Combat Master Liao, you're here."

Before entering the residence, Zhuo Qingfeng, who had heard of the news beforehand, had already come out to welcome the group. Upon seeing Liao Song, a look of agitation immediately appeared on his face. However, a moment later, he realized that something was amiss with the group.

Combat masters tended to carry a proud and might aura before others, but the group before him looked listless, as if eggplants battered by the cold 2.

"What happened to you all?" Zhuo Qingfeng couldn't hide his curiosity.

"Tell me the situation with the new principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy." Liao Song didn't respond to Zhuo Qingfeng's question.

He couldn't help but remember the young man from before saying that the origin of their strength had come from an afternoon of lecture from their principal, so he requested more information from Zhuo Qingfeng upon seeing the latter.

"You mean Principal Zhang? Alright..." Zhuo Qingfeng pondered for a moment before telling everything that he knew about Principal Zhang to Liao Song.

"Just an hour-long lecture from that Principal Zhang, and our combat masters were no match for Hongyuan's candidates at all? A night of supplementary lesson, and Hongyuan's candidates achieved zhenqi purity and physical strength far beyond our combat masters?"

Liao Song and the combat masters behind him felt as if they were listening to a ghost story. Their goosebumps rose up as horror surfaced on their faces.

"Indeed!" Zhuo Qingfeng nodded with a bitter smile. "Oh right, Principal Zhang's four direct disciples have been waiting for you in the residence for some time now. I will be depending on you to assess them later on!"

"Principal Zhang's four direct disciples? How strong are they?" Liao Song immediately asked.

"I would say that they are invincible in their respective cultivation realms. At the very least, I am no match for them at all!" Zhuo Qingfeng replied.

"Even you are no match for them?" Liao Song was astounded. After a moment of hesitation, he said, "If they are that strong, I think... we should assess them through the Dragon Gate Formation!"

"Dragon Gate Formation? Isn't that our Combat Master Hall's trial for the 'Progeny of Combat'? Liao Shi intends to... assess if they are qualified to become the 'Progeny of Combat'?" Zhuo Qingfeng was astonished.

"Indeed. Considering how Principal Zhang is able to raise the fighting prowess of the students of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy to such a tremendous extent with just a few hours of lecturing, his direct disciples... might just be able to clear the Dragon Gate Formation. If they succeed, we, as the ones who have found the Progeny of Combat, will gain significant authority and power within the Combat Master Hall!" Liao Song said.

"This..." Zhuo Qingfeng fell silent.

Indeed, if one were to view the Combat Master Hall as a clan, the position of Progeny of Combat would be equivalent to the successor of the clan!

In other words, as long as the Progeny of Combat matured, he would become the new head of the Combat Master Hall!

Countless combat masters drove themselves to the limits, hoping to become the Progeny of Combat, but it was a pity that it was simply too difficult.

For three hundred years, the Combat Master Hall had gone without a Progeny of Combat or a hall master... Would Principal Zhang's direct disciples really be able to clear the trial?

Even Combat Master Zhuo, who had tested Zheng Yang's strength personally, had no confidence whatsoever.

The Dragon Gate Formation was difficult to the point that most would think it impossible to beat!

If Principal Zhang's direct disciples were really able to clear the trial and become the Progeny of Combat, they, as the ones who had discovered the next Progeny of Combat, would have made a great contribution to the Combat Master Hall for finding its next leader. Naturally, their standing would rise, and they would gain access to better resources as well.

"We are unable to set up the complete Dragon Gate Formation, but we can emulate a simplified version. As long as they succeed in clearing this trial, we will be able to bring them back to the headquarters to apply for the real trial... Regardless of whether they succeed or not, this will be something good for us!" Liao Song said.

It would be best if Principal Zhang's direct disciples could become the Progeny of Combat, but even if they were to fail, their great talent ensured that they would rise to a position far higher than them if they entered the Combat Master Hall.

Naturally, it would be wonderful if they could gain such powerful backing.

Without hesitating for long, Zhuo Qingfeng replied, "Alright then. Let's have them challenge the simplified Dragon Gate Formation."

"Un." Liao Song nodded.

Having decided on this matter, the combat masters began making their way into the residence.

Shortly after entering the residence, School Head Mo, School Head Zhao, and a few others stepped forward to welcome them, followed by Wo Tianqiong, Wu Ran, and the others.

So as to spectate the assessment, the other three academies had decided to extend their stay in Hongyuan.

Zheng Yang, Wang Ying, Liu Yang, and Wei Ruyan were also in the residence, and they stood by the corner with an upright posture reminiscent of a sharp spear.

"Allow me to make the introductions, this is the Thousand Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall, as well as my senior, Liao Song! He will be in charge of Zheng Yang and the others' assessment," Zhuo Qingfeng said.

"Paying respects to Combat Master Liao!"

The crowd clasped their fists and greeted him.

"Un, there is no need to stand on ceremony. If I am not mistaken, these four should be Principal Zhang's direct disciples who are participating in the assessment, right?" Liao Song shot an acknowledging nod to the crowd before turning to Zheng Yang and the others.

"That's right; we are students of Zhang Xuan!" Zheng Yang and the others nodded.

"Indeed, impressive young talents," Combat Master Liao said with a smile. "I have already heard about your affairs from Combat Master Zhuo earlier, and I intend to have you challenge the Dragon Gate Formation trial!"

"Dragon Gate Formation?" Zheng Yang and the others asked with a look of confusion.

Wo Tianqiong and the others also didn't seem to have heard of the term before.

"The name of the Dragon Gate Formation originates from the story about the carps leaping beyond the Dragon Gate 3. As long as you can clear this trial, you will

immediately rise to a position far beyond others and become one of the few powerhouses of the Master Teacher Pavilion or even the entire Master Teacher Continent!" Liao Song said.

Chapter 965

Dragon Gate Formation

"Rise to a position far beyond the others?"

"One of the few powerhouses?"

The crowd couldn't help but frown upon hearing those words.

The Combat Master Hall was indeed powerful despite being a branch of the Master Teacher Pavilion, but for a single trial to shake the entire Master Teacher Continent, wasn't this too much of an exaggeration?

Seeing the looks of disbelief on the faces of others, Liao Song explained, "I am not exaggerating when I say those words. Clearing the Dragon Gate Formation is no easy feat at all. The Combat Master Hall has innumerable outstanding young combat masters, but in the past three hundred years, not a single person has succeeded in clearing the trial. I believe this is more than enough to show how difficult it is. If any individual succeeds in clearing the Dragon Gate Formation, the main headquarters of the Combat Master Hall will take them away and devote its resources to groom them. It will only be a matter of time before he becomes one of the strongest figures on the continent!"

"Not a single person has cleared the trial in the past three hundred years?"

Everyone was astonished.

The Combat Master Hall was an organization that gathered the greatest combat talents throughout the Master Teacher Continent, and its strength was irrefutable. Yet, for all the talents it had, none of them had actually succeeded in clearing the Dragon Gate Formation? This was unbelievable!

School Head Mo couldn't help but ask, "How does the Dragon Gate Formation work?"

The others also turned their gazes over.

Considering how exaggerated it sounded, the Dragon Gate Formation trial was bound to be something extremely difficult. Otherwise, it couldn't have stopped so many combat masters in their footsteps.

"Simple. The Dragon Gate Formation is divided into three main sections, the Dragon's Tail, the Dragon's Back, and the Dragon's Head. In each section, the challenger will have to face three combat masters! Of the three combat masters the challenger will be facing in the Dragon's Tail, one will possess cultivation equal to the challenger, one a cultivation stage stronger than the challenger, and one two cultivation stages stronger than the challenger," Liao Song said.

"Three combat masters? And their cultivations are getting progressively higher?" The crowd couldn't help but frown.

Combat masters wielded the strength to challenge opponents stronger than them, making them nigh invincible figures within their own cultivation realms. To face three of such opponents at once, and two of them even being stronger than challenger by a cultivation stage and two cultivation stages... This was truly a frightening trial!

"The same applies for the Dragon's Back, just that the three combat masters are three cultivation stages stronger than the combat masters on the Dragon's Tail. In other words, the three opponents which the challenger will be facing opponents will be three, four, and five cultivation stages stronger than him!" Liao Song explained.

"Take Zheng Yang for example, given that his cultivation is current at Chrysalis realm primary stage, the combat masters he will be facing on the Dragon's Back will be at Chrysalis realm pinnacle, Half-Saint primary stage, and Half-Saint intermediate stage!"

"This..."

Everyone's face twitched in astonishment, and even Zheng Yang and the others couldn't help but clench their fists tightly.

"Last but not least, on the Dragon's Head, the challenger will face three combat masters that are six, seven, and eight cultivation stages stronger than them. Using Zheng Yang as an example once more, he will face opponents at Half-Saint advanced stage, Half-Saint pinnacle, and... Nascent Saint primary stage!

"To clear the Dragon Gate Formation, one will have to defeat all nine combat masters.

These combat masters will be a Hundred Men Commander at the very least, and what makes the trial even more difficult is that these combat masters are skilled in collaborating with one another. The combined fighting prowess they display will be far beyond what they can do individually. With my strength, I wouldn't be able to clear even the easiest Dragon's Tail..." Liao Song said grimly.

After hearing the rules, everyone fell silent.

Honestly speaking, the trial was truly difficult.

Each Hundred Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall wielded strength far beyond their cultivation realm, and to face three of them simultaneously, especially when their cultivation realms were equal or greater than one... That was impossible to succeed!

It was no wonder no one had cleared this trial in the past three hundred years! This trial was simply too difficult!

Not even the powerful Captains of the Combat Master Hall would be able to clear it!

"How is it? Do you want to give it a try?" After explaining the Dragon Gate Formation, Liao Song turned his gaze to Zheng Yang and the others and asked.

Instead of responding immediately, Zheng Yang and the others lowered their heads contemplatively.

Zhuo Qingfeng was a Hundred Men Commander himself, and having crossed hands with him, Zheng Yang knew how powerful the other party was. To have to defeat nine of such opponents consecutively, each one stronger than the other, and not to mention, having to deal with their collaboration on top of that... The trial was indeed terrifyingly difficult!

"To tell you the truth, the Dragon Gate Formation I am speaking about is only the simplified version. The Dragon Gate Formation at the headquarters requires the challenger to face the Dragon's Pearl as well. At the Dragon's Pearl, an incredibly powerful expert awaits," Liao Song said.

The simplified version of the Dragon Gate Formation was usually used to assess one's qualification to face the complete Dragon Gate Formation. But even so, the number of people who had successfully cleared the simplified version over the past three

hundred years could be counted with one's fingers.

In other words, of countless geniuses that had risen in the Combat Master Hall in the past three hundred years, less than ten had managed to clear the simplified version of the Dragon Gate Formation. This went to show how difficult it was.

Soon, Zheng Yang raised his head and looked at Liao Song with a determined glint in his gaze. "I wish to give it a try."

He felt that he had to give it a try.

To be honest, he knew that he could easily grow to become one of the strongest experts on the continent following his teacher, but if he were to do so, he would only remain as excess baggage to his teacher.

Throughout this journey, he had seen what his teacher had done for them.

Advancing his cultivation from Fighter 1-dan to Transcendent Mortal 9-dan, he had used up many resources and innumerable spirit stones, and the amount of resources he would require would only increase exponentially after he reached Saint realm. As a student, it would be extremely unfilial of him to have his teacher continue bearing this burden for him!

But if he were to try to obtain the resources required for his cultivation by himself, he didn't have the means to do so, and his teacher wouldn't allow it either.

Thus, after much consideration, he felt that the best way was for him to enter the Combat Master Hall.

As an organization that nurtured experts boasting the greatest fighting prowess on the continent, it possessed the best resources across the entire Master Teacher Continent. If he could become one of their members, he wouldn't be a burden to his teacher anymore. In fact, he might even be able to shoulder some of the heavy responsibilities that his teacher shouldered.

Thus, despite the immense difficulty and danger of the trial, he felt that he had to do it!

Just like how his teacher was willing to do anything for him, he was willing to do anything for his teacher as well!

"You wish to give it a try? Very well!" Seeing that he had Zheng Yang's approval, Liao Song nodded with a smile. After which, he turned his gaze to Wang Ying and the others. "What about the rest of you?"

Wang Ying and the others also raised their faces and replied, with resolute gazes, "We wish to give it a try as well!"

They shared Zheng Yang's thoughts as well. Their teacher had simply done too much for them over the past few months. As students, they really couldn't bear to see him working so hard for them anymore. As such, they wished to become independent.

As combat masters, they would be able to make a name for themselves in the world. Perhaps, their teacher would be heartened to see this as well.

There was no teacher in the world that didn't wish for their students to spread their wings and soar into the boundless skies.

Seeing that Zheng Yang and the others had agreed to the matter, School Head Mo stepped forward and said, "Let's head to the sparring grounds then."

"Alright!" Knowing that this wasn't the place to fight, the others nodded, and the huge crowd began making their way to the sparring grounds.

The sparring ground was packed to the brim. Hearing that this assessment would be far more difficult than the previous one, innumerable students had arrived earlier in the morning in order to claim better positions to view the battle.

The news had also spread far and wide over the past three days, and many experts from Hongyuan Empire and the neighboring empires had arrived to spectate this grand moment.

They wished to see what kind of harsh assessment one who was not a master teacher would have to undergo in order to join the Combat Master Hall.

As soon as Zheng Yang and the others arrived on the scene, a huge wave of cheers rippled through the crowd.

"They are Principal Zhang's direct disciples? They look rather young."

"Principal Zhang isn't very old either!"

"Is it true that Principal Zhang's direct disciples are guest elders of the Master Teacher Academy?"

"Indeed. Their comprehension of battle techniques has reached an unbelievably profound level."

...

Many discussions could be heard beneath the stage.

When the visiting experts learned that Zheng Yang and the others were actually guest elders in the Master Teacher Academy, they were stunned.

There was no one in a Tier-1 Empire who was unaware of the significance of being a guest elder in the Master Teacher Academy. For young cultivators who weren't twenty yet and weren't even master teachers to become guest elders, just how powerful were they to have been awarded such prestige?

"Principal Zhang and his students are truly legends..."

"We really should keep our eyes wide open today. We could very well be witnessing the birth of a new legend today!"

After listening about the affairs regarding Principal Zhang and his direct disciples, everyone fell silent.

It was one thing for the teacher to be so formidable, but for his students to be so outstanding as well, this was truly amazing!

"Alright, let's begin the Dragon Gate Formation!"

After completing all of the arrangements, Liao Song whistled, and the nine combat masters by his side leaped onto the stage in a winding formation, reminiscent of a massive dragon crouching on the ground, preparing to rise into the boundless sky at any moment.

Pilipala!

With several crisp echoes, the nine combat masters swiftly suppressed their cultivation to the respective levels, ranging from Chrysalis realm primary stage all the

way to Nascent Saint primary stage.

"I am Liao Song, a Thousand Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall. I request for the permission to set up the Dragon Gate Formation to assess candidates for Progeny of Combat!"

After all was ready, Liao Song took out a token and flicked it into the air, following which the token floated above the grounds, and he began to speak grandly.

Boom!

Following which, spiritual energy began to gather in the surroundings as an immense power from very distant lands suddenly permeated the surroundings.

"This aura... the Combat Master Hall headquarters? Just what is this Dragon Gate Formation for it to actually require the permission of the headquarters?"

"I have no idea, but for it to require the headquarters' permission, just like the Master Teacher Confrontation... It seems this is no ordinary assessment!"

"Indeed. If the supervision of the headquarters is required to conduct this assessment, it can only mean that Combat Master Liao doesn't have the authority to conduct or judge this assessment!"

The crowd beneath had no idea what the Dragon Gate Formation represented, but upon seeing Liao Song communicating with the headquarters to request permission, their expressions swiftly changed to ones of astonishment.

For an examination to actually require permission from the headquarters, just how difficult could it be?

Hualala!

While everyone was still in shock, the spiritual energy from the heavens was suddenly reflected onto the ground, seemingly setting up some kind of peculiar formation. Under the effects of the formation, the nine combat masters were divided into three hidden portions, and the only part that was revealed at this moment resembled the powerful trail of a gigantic dragon. It felt as if a single lash of the tail could cause stir up a powerful storm, and its presence felt incredibly pressurizing to those standing before it.

"This is... the prowess of the combat masters has been enhanced by the formation?"

The faces of Wo Tianqiong and the others twitched.

The three combat masters in the Dragon's Tail were already plenty formidable themselves. For them to be augmented by a formation on top of that, how was anyone supposed to defeat that?

Putting aside a Chrysalis realm primary stage cultivator, even a Half-Saint would fall in an instant!

"Zheng Yang... be careful!" Wang Ying said with a frown.

"Don't worry!" Zheng Yang nodded. He took a deep breath before leaping up onto the stage. With a faint smile on his lips, he declared loudly, "I am the direct disciple of Zhang Xuan, Zheng Yang! I will be challenging the Dragon Gate Formation!"

Hong long!

As soon as the declaration was made, a ray of light shot down from the heavens, shrouding Zheng Yang's body, seemingly confirming his identity and strength.

Soon, the verification was complete, and the light faded. A huge word appeared in the sky. "Permitted!"

Similar to the Master Teacher Confrontation, this battle would be supervised by the Combat Master Hall headquarters.

Seeing that the headquarters had agreed to it, Liao Song heaved a sigh of relief and said, "Alright, you can begin now..."

"Un!" Zheng Yang nodded as he flicked his wrist to take out a long spear.

With a spear in his hand, his aura immediately changed. It became ferocious and powerful, reminiscent of a mighty tiger. A powerful surge of zhenqi emanated from his body, causing his hair to float in the air. In that moment, he bore some resemblance to an indomitable god of war.

"How powerful!"

Feeling that incredible aura, the faces of the nonchalant combat masters turned grim.

Even though the cultivation of the young man before them was only at Chrysalis realm primary stage, the sheer might of his aura exceeded even that of a Half-Saint cultivator.

"Come!"

After sharpening his aura to its limit, Zheng Yang released a furious war cry as he dashed forward toward the three combat masters in the Dragon's Tail. In an instant, his spear seemed to converge into a single spot of light as it burst ferociously toward his opponent.

Boom!

Amidst the incredible might of the spear, a huge shockwave rippled into the surroundings, and a deafening blast reminiscent of the roar of thunder silenced the surroundings.

Chapter 966

Zhang laoshi's Students (1)

"Hah, do you think we will give you an opportunity to close in on us?"

"Humph!"

Seeing Zheng Yang's spear warping into a bolt of lightning, the three combat masters maintaining the Dragon's Tail harrumphed coldly. They converged their zhenqi together, and in that moment, the spiritual energy within several dozen kilometers felt as if it had been absorbed cleanly by the formation, resulting in the surrounding air becoming extremely dry and stifling. Following which, the gigantic Dragon's Tail lashed at an unbelievable speed toward Zheng Yang.

Knowing that the combat masters would retaliate in such a manner, Zheng Yang stepped forcefully against the ground, creating a three cun 1 depression beneath him, and calmly executed a powerful flick to fend off the Dragon's Tail.

Tzz la!

As the spear and the Dragon's Tail met one another, overwhelmingly powerful gales rippled forth from the collision with incredible momentum, causing the crowd beneath to squint their eyes before the strong winds.

"Scram!"

Widening his eyes, Zheng Yang roared as he pushed his spear forward with even greater force.

Boom!

Under the incomparable might of his spear, the massive Dragon's Tail was forcefully flicked up into the sky.

With a single strike, he had overpowered the three combat masters and fended off the Dragon's Tail!

Pu! Pu! Pu!

With the Dragon's Tail being flicked away, the three combat masters each spurted a mouthful of blood as they hurriedly took a single step back. They raised their gazes to look at the young man before them once more, but this time, with incredulity etched into their faces.

They had guessed that they might not be a match for Zheng Yang when they heard that Combat Master Zhuo wasn't a match for the latter, and the other party accepting the challenge of the Dragon Gate Formation trial despite hearing of its difficulty showed his confidence. But... they never could have imagined that they would be overpowered in a clash of brute force! The other party had actually succeeded in flicking the Dragon's Tail away in a clash of brute force!

And more importantly... this was only the first move, and they were already injured!

How were they supposed to continue the battle?

"The Dragon Gate Formation is supervised by the Combat Master Hall headquarters, so no cheating of any sort is allowed. He might have flicked away the Dragon's Tail, but if he wishes to clear this section, he must defeat us!" one of the combat masters said grimly.

So what if the other party had managed to flick away the Dragon's Tail?

The three of them were only lightly injured in the encounter. With the combined force of three Hundred Men Commanders, it was not entirely impossible for them to stop the other party!

"You're right!" Another combat master nodded in agreement as he prepared his stance.

However, in that split moment, the weakest of the three, the Chrysalis realm primary stage combat master, was abruptly impaled by a spear in his shoulder and collapsed to the ground.

"His spear is so swift?"

The other two combat masters narrowed their eyes in shock.

They might have been talking, but they had been on guard all along, prepared to retaliate should Zheng Yang attempt anything. Yet, the other party had actually managed to breach their defense so easily and defeat one of their comrades.

If they were to just speak a few more words, would their team be completely annihilated?

"Humph!"

But as combat masters who had braved through countless battles, as shock as they were, they didn't allow themselves to panic. Roaring furiously, the remaining two combat masters made their moves simultaneously.

Their teamwork was seamless. One of them took care of the offense while the other one covered them both. Two men with four hands, there were far more maneuvers they could execute than their opponent. If their opponent couldn't deal with their attack promptly, he could very well find himself cornered.

In face of the offense of the two combat masters, Zheng Yang raised his spear and pushed it forward to perform a pierce.

Huala!

Even before the spear reached its target, it had already devoured the spiritual energy in the surroundings to warp into a majestic dragon, threatening to devastate all in its path.

Peng!

The spear tip struck the sword of the combat master responsible for defense, and with a resounding metallic clang, the combat master felt his arm numbing under the immense force, and his purlicue 2 ripped apart glaringly.

The other party's attack was not only focused and powerful, it was also relentless like a river current. As powerful as his defense was, he still failed to fend off the other party's spear.

Zheng Yang successfully knocked away the combat master's sword, but he didn't push his spear on. This was because the attack of the combat master in charge of offense was already right before him.

"Go!" Instead of dodging, Zheng Yang made a sharp swerve in the trajectory of his spear, sweeping it sideward in an arc toward the other combat master.

Peng!

It struck the other combat master's waist squarely. Before the combat master had any time to react, he was already sent flying under the immense might of the slash, spurting blood furiously as he flew through the air, eventually crashing to the bottom of the stage.

Weng!

After sending the combat master flying, Zheng Yang twisted his spear once more and drove it forward furiously, stopping it only right before the throat of the combat master in charge of defense.

"We... have lost!" Feeling the cold killing intent from the tip of the spear, the sole remaining combat master's face turned ashen in despair.

Of the three of them guarding the Dragon's Tail, their opponent first move swiftly incapacitated the weakest of them with a swift pierce before turning the assault toward him. However, the assault turned out to be only a feint to draw in the attack of the other combat master. While the other combat master launched his attack, the opponent swiftly turned his pierce into a sweep, catching the other combat master off guard and knocking him off the stage, thus undoing their teamwork. With that, he was the only one left.

There was no way he could win at this point anymore.

"They lost, just like that?"

"That Zheng Yang only used three moves..."

"Indeed! To defeat the Dragon's Tail in just three moves... that is too fearsome!"

"Even though it was only three moves, did you notice how he was able to transition from a pierce into a sweep without any pause in between? Such an abrupt change in motion will cause the zhenqi in one's body to collide forcefully with one another... How strong is his body to be able to endure the backlash without a problem?"

"You're right. This kind of forceful change in motion can easily result in one's meridians rupturing, but not only was he fine, his sweep was extremely powerful as well. This only goes to show that his body is powerful, his meridians are resilient, and his zhenqi is incomparably pure. Without any of the three, it would be impossible to pull off such a stunt!"

"If it was me, even without an opponent, I would have surely sustained severe internal injuries..."

Upon seeing this sight, everyone's faces paled in astonishment.

Zheng Yang's movements seemed simple, but they were highly demanding on one's body, zhenqi, meridians, and reflexes.

If any of those were to fail to meet the mark, not only would he have failed to achieve victory, he would even have sustained severe internal injuries on the spot.

On top of that, it was apparent that he had grasped the flow of battle precisely to defeat the three combat masters of the Dragon's Tail in the shortest time with the minimal depletion. This went to show that not only did he possess superior strength, his comprehension of combat had also reached an unbelievable level.

"Their loss was inevitable..." Liao Song shook his head.

He had been thinking that it was unlikely for Zheng Yang to successfully clear the Dragon Gate Formation, but after seeing this, he couldn't help but think that perhaps the young man before him might just be able to accomplish this impressive feat that none had accomplished in the past three hundred years.

The three combat masters that Zheng Yang had faced earlier were his subordinates, and he knew very well how formidable their fighting prowess was when they collaborated with one another. Yet, despite the augmentation from the Dragon Gate Formation on top of that, they hadn't been able to withstand three blows from him.

The other party's strength was indeed fearsome. With his cultivation suppressed to be of an equal level to the other party, even three of him were unlikely to be a match for the other party.

Hu!

While the crowd below was still recovering from the shocking scene they had just witnessed, on the stage, Zheng Yang exhaled a mouthful of turbid air before he raised his gaze toward the Dragon's Back and walked with widened strides.

To the others, it might have seemed as if he had achieved an easy victory. However, he knew very well that it hadn't been as easy as he'd made it out to be.

Had he not internalized the essence of his teacher's impartation, it would have been impossible for him to defeat the combat masters so swiftly.

Even so, he still felt a stifling sensation in his chest and a sharp pain in his meridians, as if someone had attempted to rip them apart.

Facing the Dragon's Tail head on and the sharp change in his maneuver had caused him some injuries, but fortunately, they weren't too serious.

While walking forward, he drove his zhenqi in a way that his teacher had taught him to heal his injuries. By the time he was on his tenth step, he felt the stifling sensation in his chest alleviate, and his strength was restored back to its peak.

Even though he had only cultivated a simplified version of the Heaven's Path Divine Art, his zhenqi did share some of the miraculous properties that Heaven's Path zhenqi possessed. He could heal his wounds and stamina far swifter and more efficiently as compared to cultivators with other zhenqi.

"Time to challenge the next opponents!"

With his strength restored, Zheng Yang smirked as he drove his spear forward toward the three combat masters of the Dragon's Back.

Even the weakest of the combat masters of the Dragon's Back had a cultivation of Chrysalis realm pinnacle while the other two were Half-Saint experts. Their combined fighting prowess was several times stronger than that of the Dragon's Tail combat masters.

Grasping the initiative, he pushed forcefully against the ground, and as if a bolt of lightning, he was already standing before the three combat masters in the blink of an eye. With immense force, he thrust his spear forward toward them.

Seeing the abrupt burst of speed from Zheng Yang, Liu Yang couldn't help but turn to

the young lady beside him and ask, "Wang Ying, you imparted your movement technique to him?"

"Un." Wang Ying nodded.

Their teacher had only imparted the movement art to her, but as fellow disciples, they shared a close relationship and often interacted and learned from one another. In those interactions, she had imparted the movement technique to Zheng Yang, and the latter had also imparted his spear art to her.

However, it was a pity that Zheng Yang's talent in the field of movement arts was beneath hers. Nevertheless, he was still able to move at incredible speeds with it, making it was a powerful tool he could utilize in battle to catch his opponent off guard.

Zheng Yang's spear was directed at the blind spot of two of the combat masters, catching them off guard. However, the remaining combat master was able to react swiftly, and he slashed his sword toward Zheng Yang's back.

At this point, it was already too late to retract his spear. Left with no choice, Zheng Yang twisted his body slightly and sent a punch toward his back.

Peng!

His fist collided with the combat master's sword, and the pale-faced latter was forced to retreat seven steps.

Upon seeing this fight, Wang Ying glanced to Liu Yang and asked with a smile, "You also imparted your fist art to him?"

"That's right." Liu Yang nodded.

He had also imparted his fist art to Zheng Yang. In other words, the latter possessed a strong fist art, movement art, leg art, and spear art, granting him plenty of options to maneuver around in a battle.

"It will be difficult for those three to defeat Zheng Yang," Wang Ying remarked with a meaningful smile.

They knew very well how powerful the battle techniques that their teacher had imparted to them were, especially given that they had cultivated the techniques

themselves.

Just by learning a single maneuver in their battle technique, a cultivator could easily go unrivaled by any of their peers in the world. On the other hand, Zheng Yang had learned the full battle technique and achieved deep mastery in each of them.

The three combat masters on the stage each possessed a higher cultivation than him, two of them even reaching Half-Saint, but it would still be difficult for them to defeat Zheng Yang.

While his fellow disciples were conversing, on the stage, Zheng Yang was alternating his usage of fist art, spear art, and movement art, making it difficult for the three combat masters to defend against him.

His fist was forceful, his spear was swift, and his movement art was unfathomable. Facing such powerful battle techniques, cold sweat began to trickle down the foreheads of the three combat masters as the pressure they felt grew progressively greater.

"This won't do. At this rate, we will surely lose," one of the combat masters exclaimed.

As they had suppressed their cultivation to the required levels as demanded by the requirement of the Dragon Gate Formation, their eyes of discernment and combat sense exceeded those that were typical of their current suppressed cultivation realm. Yet, despite utilizing all of their means, they were still unable to clinch the upper hand. On the contrary, if they were to make the slightest mistake, they could very well find themselves pierced by a sharp spear. The pressure they were under was so great that they felt like they were going to collapse from it.

The young man before their eyes was young, but his physical strength, zhenqi, eye of discernment, and comprehension of combat were clearly far above them individually. It was as if their opponent had no weakness that they could exploit at all!

"Use our strongest move!" another combat master yelled as he swung the sword in his hands furiously. The immense zhenqi he exerted in the move formed a huge curtain in the air, looming above Zheng Yang like a huge wave that would soon crash down on him.

Not wanting to be outdone, another combat master grabbed his spear tightly, imbuing it with a brilliant blue light. After which, he tossed his spear forward with astounding

momentum, and in that instant, even the heavens seemed to have darkened in fear before its sharp tip, seemingly fearing that the spear would pierce a hole through it.

"Don't forget that there is still me!"

The third combat master leaped into the air and swung his gigantic hammer down furiously. In that moment, it felt like a massive pot lid had appeared above the stage, covering the entire area as it descended with frightening force.

The teamwork of the three combat masters was seamless. Without even communicating with one another, they had each assumed a certain role in the attack, be it offense, defense, or sealing the opponent's movement. In that moment, Zheng Yang fell into a perilous situation.

Upon seeing that sight, the faces of School Head Mo and the others paled. "This is bad. They have devoted the maximum strength that they can draw from their current cultivation in that attack. I fear that Zheng Yang will be unable to survive the attack."

If it had been them challenging the Dragon's Back, it was unlikely that they would have been able to even withstand a single blow. It was truly not easy for a sixteen or seventeen-year-old youth to have held on until this point.

But facing such a dire situation, was it still possible for him to turn the tables and achieve victory?

At this point, everyone felt as if their hearts were about to leap out of their throats.

Chapter 967

Zhang laoshi's Students (2)

"Humph!"

Facing the devastating attacks all around him, Zheng Yang didn't panic. Instead, a smile crept onto his lips.

"Finally!"

He ignored the attacks and leaped into the sky instead.

"What is he doing? He will only expose more openings in the sky and hasten his loss!"

"If he attempts to escape at this point, he will only be cornering himself further! Is he trying to admit defeat?"

"Even though he will be able to avoid the attacks for the time being through his move, he will only be exposing him to even more danger in a moment. This is truly a failed move."

...

A commotion broke out amid the crowd.

Zheng Yang had displayed incredible battle sense and outstanding maneuvers throughout the course of the battle, aweing everyone, so why would he make such a fatal flaw in this crucial moment?

Chrysalis realm cultivators were incapable of flight, and if he had remained on the ground, he might still have stood a chance against the combat masters. The inability of Chrysalis realm cultivators to maneuver adeptly in the air only meant that he would become an easy target for his opponents to strike.

Before innumerable shocked gazes, Zheng Yang moved horizontally in the air to dodge all of the attacks heading for him before charging downwards with his spear.

"Is he... flying?"

"How can a Chrysalis realm cultivator fly?"

Everyone was stunned.

Only a Half-Saint who had opened their Zhukong acupoint was capable of flying freely in the sky.

The young man before them was just a Chrysalis realm cultivator, so how could he maneuver so freely in the air?

Wang Ying chuckled. "It seems like Teacher has taught him the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps as well."

Their teacher had been able to fly in the air freely despite being at Transcendent Mortal realm because he had cultivated this movement technique. Clearly, Zheng Yang had inherited that technique as well.

"Zheng Yang is indeed rather sharp. He knows that under normal circumstances, he wouldn't be able to stand against their strongest moves. Thus, he chose to intentionally display an opening to focus everyone's attacks on him, but making use of the conventional notion that Chrysalis realm cultivators are incapable of flight, he caught them off guard and easily averted the crisis while turning the situation on them at the same time. Those three are done for," Liu Yang said with a smile.

It was a common notion among cultivators that those beneath Chrysalis realm were weak in the air because they were incapable of flight, and it was making use of this notion that Zheng Yang had been able to earn an opportunity to strike.

Before Liu Yang could finish his words, Zheng Yang's spear transformed into innumerable bursts of light that shot forth from the sky, barraging the three combat masters on the stage.

Peng! Peng! Peng!

Under the relentless assault, the faces of the three combat masters paled as they were knocked back, and two even fell straight off the stage.

"It seems like I have won!" Holding his spear, Zheng Yang stood upright on the stage

as he shot a sweeping gaze at his surroundings with an indomitable disposition.

Many had thought that he would fall at the Dragon's Back, but he had managed to clear it successfully.

After clearing this section, Zheng Yang didn't rush ahead. Instead, he sat cross-legged on the ground and swallowed a pill to recover his stamina and depleted zhenqi.

Upon seeing his actions, the surroundings immediately fell silent so as not to disturb his recuperation.

Beneath the stage, Liao Song clenched his fists tightly as his face reddened in agitation.

The fact that Zheng Yang had successfully cleared the Dragon's Back bore testimony to his strength. As long as he trained diligently after entering the Combat Master Hall, he would surely be able to become a Captain at the very least in the future. To have discovered such an expert, he would surely be able to rise through the ranks.

Even if Zheng Yang failed to clear the final Dragon's Head, he would still benefit greatly from this matter.

...

Zheng Yang rested for a whole hour before standing up. At this point, the energy coursing through his body had reached a new peak. As if a powerful storm had been raised within his body, the deep rumbling of thunder could be vaguely heard from within his body.

With every step he took forward, the aura he emanated grew stronger and sharper by a bit. By the eighth step, a loud buzz sounded, and his cultivation advanced from Chrysalis realm primary stage to intermediate stage!

"He is advancing his cultivation right before the battle?" Wo Tianqiong was astonished. He turned his gaze to Liao Song and asked, "Will the combat masters in the Dragon's Head adjust their cultivation accordingly?"

The opponents in the Dragon's Tail, Dragon's Back, and Dragon's Head of the Dragon Gate Formation were scaled according to the cultivation of the challenger. Given that Zheng Yang had achieved a breakthrough, would the opponents behind adjust the difficulty of the challenge according to the present circumstances?

"They won't. There is a time limit of two hours to the trial, and achieving a breakthrough within this limited time can be considered a method of adaptation by the cultivator. It won't cause any difference to the difficulty of the later trials," Liao Song replied.

If a challenger was able to achieve a breakthrough within the duration of the Dragon Gate Formation, it would be attributed to the challenger's own capability as well. As such, no adjustments would be made.

Besides, a breakthrough by a cultivation stage wouldn't make much of a difference to the trial. After all, there was no way one could achieve a breakthrough by an entire cultivation realm within two hours!

While they were speaking, Zheng Yang continued walking. By the eleventh step, he had already managed to reinforce his Chrysalis realm intermediate stage cultivation fully.

Proceeding ahead, the zhenqi in his body began rumbling once more, just like before, and his aura continued to grow stronger.

Boom!

By the nineteenth step, he overcame his bottleneck and successfully reached Chrysalis realm advanced stage!

"This..."

Everyone's eyebrows leaped up. As cultivators, they had seen many breakthroughs throughout their lives, but they had never seen a person making consecutively breakthroughs so quickly!

To make two breakthroughs while walking a little more than a dozen steps, this was inconceivable!

On top of that, Zheng Yang was showing no signs of stopping yet. As he continued walking forward, the energy in his body continued to rumble furiously.

By the time he reached the Dragon's Head, his cultivation had already reached Chrysalis realm pinnacle!

Wang Ying smiled. "Over the past few days, Zheng Yang has accumulated a vast

amount of zhenqi, but he chose to suppress his cultivation until this moment. Finally, his hard work has paid off..."

Back when Zheng Yang received news that he was going to take the assessment to become a combat master, he worked harder than ever on his cultivation, but he chose to suppress it despite already being able to achieve a breakthrough. The purpose of it was so as to allow him to swiftly reach higher realms in the middle of a battle and catch his opponent off guard.

Of course, the main reason he was able to do so was also due to the unique nature of the cultivation technique that his teacher had imparted to him. For normal cultivators, it would already have been incredible if they advanced a cultivation stage on the spot. Due to the capacity of their dantian, they were incapable of storing sufficient zhenqi to make multiple breakthroughs on the spot.

"This move of his is not bad; he has lessened the gap between him and the combat masters in the Dragon's Head. Perhaps I should try the same when I challenge the trial later on," Liu Yang remarked with a smile.

Zheng Yang didn't rush to attack the combat masters of the Dragon's Head. Instead, he flicked his wrist and popped a scarlet fruit into his mouth.

"That is... the Scarlet Firefly Fruit?"

Beneath the stage, Wu Xu and Lu Cheng recognized the item that Zheng Yang had just ingested, and their eyes narrowed in alarm.

Back then, they had gone to a valley in order to procure that fruit, only to leave empty-handed. All along, they had suspected that Zhang Xuan had taken it before them, and from the looks of it now, that was indeed the case.

The Scarlet Firefly Fruit was known for its effect of enhancing a cultivator's chances of achieving a breakthrough to Half-Saint. That fellow on the stage had already advanced his cultivation by three stages. It couldn't be that he still wanted to make the breakthrough to Half-Saint on top of that?

There was huge gap between Chrysalis realm and Half-Saint. If one were to succeed, there would be a qualitative leap in one's fighting prowess. By then, given his combat capability, clearing the Dragon's Head would be a walk in the park.

Wu Xu and Lu Cheng weren't the only one who noticed this. Having come to the same conclusion as well, Liao Song bellowed, " Strike the army while it's crossing the river! 1 "

Hong long long!

Upon hearing the bellow, the three combat masters in the Dragon's Head immediately raised their weapons and charged at Zheng Yang.

In any case, the other party was already in their area of battle, so it wasn't against the rules for them to make a move.

"Hehe, it just so happens that I could use some help digesting this surge of energy. I will use you all to practice my spear!" Zheng Yang's eyebrows shot up as he raised his spear to retaliate.

Typically speaking, the Scarlet Firefly Fruit would require at least two to four hours to digest, but if one were to be pressured in battle, the speed could be hastened significantly.

Back then, during the Master Teacher Tournament in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, Zhang Xuan had used the same method to raise his Transcendent Mortal 4-dan Clarifying Turbidity realm's cultivation swiftly.

Under normal circumstances, it would be nigh impossible for Zheng Yang to defeat the Dragon's Head. However, with the Scarlet Firefly Fruit, his chances would be boosted manyfold!

And as expected, the more he clashed with the combat masters, the greater the energy within his body became. In this moment, it was as if he had become a tireless machine of perpetual motion.

Not only so, his cultivation was swiftly progressing to Half-Saint. After trading around a hundred blows, a crisp echo sounded from his body, and his fighting prowess suddenly went through a qualitative change and surged exponentially.

Half-Saint, reached!

Upon reaching Half-Saint, Zheng Yang's fighting prowess had more than doubled. With his newfound strength, the three combat masters of the Dragon's Head whom he had

struggled against just a moment ago were no longer a match for him. Within ten blows, he had already knocked them off the stage with his spear.

Dragon Gate Formation, cleared!

"He... really succeeded?" Clenching his fists in agitation, Liao Song could hardly believe what he was seeing.

A feat that countless geniuses in the Combat Master Hall had failed to achieve, and yet, this sixteen or seventeen-year-old youth who wasn't even a master teacher had actually cleared it so easily... This was inconceivable!

"Cleared!"

The will from the headquarters supervising the Dragon Gate Formation from the sky left behind this word before gradually fading. In other words, the result of this trial was recognized by the Combat Master Hall headquarters.

In the future, if Zheng Yang were to head to the Combat Master Hall headquarters, he could challenge the Dragon's Pearl directly without undergoing the previous three sections!

While this wasn't the complete Dragon Gate Formation, over the span of the past three hundred years, there were less than ten combat masters who had successfully cleared this trial. To be even more direct, at this very moment, Zheng Yang had already become a candidate to become the Progeny of Combat.

Clenching his fists tightly, tears began to stream down Zheng Yang's cheeks. "I have succeeded..."

He was only an ordinary youth who had a passion for spearmanship. Had he not met his teacher, he probably would have remained in Tianxuan Kingdom his entire life, unaware of the greater world out there. His cultivation would have been capped at Tongxuan realm 2 , and he might have become a spearmanship teacher for other cultivators. He would have spent the hundred years of his life humbly and idly, achieving nothing significant at all, leaving nothing worthy of note when he was reduced to dust at the end of his life.

It was his teacher who had changed his life, showing him that the world was greater than what he could see.

It was his teacher who had brought him to where he was, reaching a height that he dared not imagine in the past.

It was his teacher who had given him confidence and a goal, teaching him what he should fight for.

Clenching his fists tightly, Zheng Yang made a vow. "Teacher, don't worry. I will surely advance further and further. I will make a name out of myself in the Combat Master Hall so as to not let you down!"

As Zheng Yang walked down the stage, Liao Song turned his gaze to Wang Ying and the others. "Alright. Now that Zheng Yang has cleared the trial... do the rest of you still want to give it a try?"

"Of course!" Wang Ying smiled.

Even if she didn't become a combat master, she wished to show the world her strength and bring glory to her teacher's name!

Wang Ying was just about to leap onto the stage when she heard a slightly soft and gentle voice from the side.

"Senior, why don't you allow me to try first? I am the most junior of us, so if I am able to clear the trial, you will surely be able to do the same!"

Turning around, she saw a pair of eyes looking at her with a brilliant gleam within.

Wei Ruyan.

Chapter 968

Zhang laoshi's Students (3)

"You?" Wang Ying frowned.

Even though they were all direct disciples of Zhang laoshi, Wei Ruyan had only joined two months ago, and the guidance she had received from Zhang Xuan was limited.

A normal combat master assessment wouldn't pose much of a problem to her, but the Dragon Gate Formation was likely beyond her means for now.

After all, even Zheng Yang had needed to use some tricks and put in quite a bit of effort before he could succeed.

If he hadn't suppressed his cultivation and pushed for a breakthrough in the midst of his battle, it would have been nearly impossible for him to defeat the Dragon's Head.

"Even though it hasn't been long since I came under Teacher's lineage, I hope to give it a try," Wei Ruyan said resolutely.

This wasn't a decision she had made on the spur of the moment but something she had decided upon long ago.

Seeing that Wei Ruyan was determined, Wang Ying nodded. "Alright then. Be careful. If you find yourself in any danger, surrender immediately!"

"Thank you, senior!" Wei Ruyan replied before leaping onto the stage.

"Is this lady... Principal Zhang's direct disciple as well?" Upon seeing Wei Ruyan going onto the stage, doubtful expressions surfaced on the faces of the students and teachers of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy.

Wang Ying, Zheng Yang, and Liu Yang were guest elders in the academy, so it was natural that the students and teachers had heard of them. On the other hand, Wei Ruyan had never appeared in public before. Furthermore, she had a particularly weak physique, which indicated that she wasn't an active person, so was she really suited to

challenge the Dragon Gate Formation?

"I heard that she is a student that Principal Zhang accepted two months ago!"

"Two months ago? So short?"

"That's right..."

Some who were aware of the matter whispered among the crowd, sharing the news around.

Principal Zhang was formidable, but it seemed impossible, even for him, to train a student whom he had accepted only two months early to a standard capable of clearing the trial.

On top of that, Principal Zhang had been outside for most of the past two months due to his 6-star master teacher examination, only returning a few days prior. Even if he had made time for some lessons with Wei Ruyan, the amount of time they would have had together was still severely limited. Was that really sufficient for her to clear such a difficult trial?

After all, the Dragon Gate Formation was at least tenfold more difficult than the Combat Master Selection before!

After checking Wei Ruyan's cultivation, Liao Song said, "Your cultivation is at Chrysalis realm pinnacle, so going by that, the opponents you will be facing will have cultivations ranging from Chrysalis realm pinnacle to Nascent Saint pinnacle!"

Of the group who had assessed Zheng Yang, even though one had been impaled by his spear, there were still others who could substitute for the wounded. As for the others, while they had been wounded in the confrontation, those were just light wounds, and they had mostly recovered. It wasn't a problem for them to go another round.

Thus, they were still able to make up the nine members required for the Dragon Gate Formation.

"Alright." Wei Ruyan nodded.

Had Zheng Yang not achieved the consecutive breakthroughs, she would have been the one with the highest cultivation among Zhang Xuan's direct disciples. At the

current moment, she was just a step away from reaching Half-Saint.

An hour later, the preparation for the Dragon Gate Formation was finally done. Liao Song turned to Wei Ruyan and said, "Alright, you can begin!"

Wei Ruyan nodded, and her eyes immediately turned grim. At the same time, her mind became incredibly composed, unperturbed by anything in her surroundings.

Tortured by her affliction for so many years, she had matured far beyond her age. In terms of mental resilience, even Lu Chong couldn't compare with her. In face of difficult situations, she could maintain her composure and not panic.

Huala!

With the start of the trial, the three combat masters began to drive their zhenqi, and a powerful might burst forth from them, creating an immense pressure on their opponent.

Wei Ruyan pushed her feet against the ground and dashed right toward them.

"She isn't going to use any weapons?" Seeing Wei Ruyan rushing toward the Dragon's Tail unarmed, the crowd couldn't help but frown.

Even with a spear in hand, Zheng Yang had found it relatively tough to deal with the Dragon Gate Formation. Considering that Wei Ruyan was a delicate lady, how could she defeat the powerful combat masters bare-handed?

"She... just started cultivating two months ago, so she hasn't learned how to wield any weapons yet," Wang Ying explained with a bitter smile.

"Just started cultivating two months ago?" Wo Tianqiong widened his eyes in shock.

"Un. She has been ill from a young age, and it was only two months ago that our teacher successfully treated her affliction and accepted her as his direct disciple. It was then that she first started cultivating," Wang Ying replied.

"She only started cultivating two months ago and is unable to use any weapon. How is she supposed to win like that?" Wo Tianqiong nearly fainted on the spot.

They had all seen with his own eyes how fearsome the Dragon Gate Formation was.

For a cultivator who had just started cultivating two months ago and couldn't even wield a weapon properly to rush right in...

Are you here to play?

Hearing those words, Liao Song's lips also twitched.

The Dragon Gate Formation is a trial that countless combat masters have challenged only to fail. Do you all really think that... it is that simple to clear?

Peng! Peng! Peng!

While the group was speaking, Wei Ruyan had already begun clashing with the three combat masters of the Dragon's Tail.

Upon seeing their fight, Liao Song's cheeks began to twitch.

"She... doesn't know any battle techniques?"

To his astonishment, the young lady's movements were extremely crude, as if she had never learned even the most basic of fist arts before. She was simply flailing her arms around erratically with all the strength she could muster, a clear indication of an amateur.

Anyone who had learned the slightest bit of a battle technique would never utilize such crude movements!

"Battle techniques... In the past two months, she has been busy reinforcing her cultivation, and Teacher also hasn't had any time to teach her a battle technique yet," Wang Ying said awkwardly.

From the moment she woke up, Wei Ruyan had been a Chrysalis realm cultivator. But as strong as she was, her power was built up through the accumulation of medicinal energy, an extremely unstable foundation. As such, their teacher had instructed her to start cultivating from the very bottom to reinforce her cultivation.

Working diligently for the past two months, she had barely managed to reinforce her cultivation up to Chrysalis realm, so how could she have any time to learn battle techniques?

Besides, their teacher had been extremely busy in the past two months, only meeting them on three occasions to guide them in their cultivation.

"She wasn't taught any battle techniques?" Hearing those words, Liao Song nearly spurted a mouthful of blood. "Given her state... you still allowed her to challenge the Dragon Gate Formation?"

Aren't you making light of the Dragon Gate Formation?

Putting aside the fact that she is unable to use any weapon and hasn't learned any battle techniques at all, more importantly, she only started cultivating two months ago! To allow such an amateur to challenge the Dragon Gate Formation, aren't you underestimating our combat masters way too much?

They were impressed by Principal Zhang because of his deep understanding of battle techniques and combat techniques. Those who had listened to his lecture had found their fighting prowess raised by leaps and bounds.

However, even though Wei Ruyan was Principal Zhang's direct disciple, she had barely learned any of the basics! To challenge the Dragon Gate Formation like that... there was no doubt, she was bound to lose!

The same thoughts also surfaced in the minds of Wo Tianqiong, Wu Ran, and the others, and they couldn't help but shake their heads.

"It's fine. Since she wants to challenge the Dragon Gate Formation, so be it. Besides, it is not certain whether she will lose or not..." Contrary to the opinion of most, Wang Ying had a different thought in mind.

The others might not have been aware of how fearsome Wei Ruyan was, but she was. Even if she were to fight against Wei Ruyan, she had no confidence that she would be able to achieve victory. The combat masters on the stage were indeed powerful, but it was not entirely impossible for Wei Ruyan to defeat them.

Her teacher had taught each of them according to their own strengths. Since her teacher hadn't taught Wei Ruyan any battle techniques to date, naturally, that could only mean that there was no need to do so. Otherwise, given how the other students could easily become combat experts after an hour-long lecture, how could Wei Ruyan still be completely ignorant of battle techniques?

Noticing the confidence in Wang Ying's voice, Liao Song shook his head. "I think you are being too optimistic. The strength of our combat masters is no joke... Ah? What the heck!"

He had just been about to advise the other party against the matter when he suddenly caught sight of what was happening on the stage with his peripheral vision and choked on his words.

"What is going on? Why are your combat masters... suddenly moving so slow as if they are drunk?" Not only was Liao Song astonished by what he saw, Wo Tianqiong and the others also widened their eyes in shock.

At this moment, the three combat masters of the Dragon's Tail were swaying weakly on their feet, and their movements were becoming slower and duller by the moment. It was as if they had turned from energetic young men into frail elderly all of a sudden.

"Isn't this cheating? Even if they wished to go easy on her, this is not the way to do so!"

"Even I could clear the Dragon Gate Formation like that!"

The crowd below were also bewildered by the situation on top.

When they were facing Zheng Yang earlier, those combat masters had displayed an indomitable aura that would instill fear into any opponent. Why had they suddenly become so soft all of the sudden, as if there was no strength within their bodies? Was it because their opponent was a beautiful lady?

But this was a formal trial; they shouldn't have been going easy on the other party like that, especially not so openly!

How brazen!

After taking a closer look, Liao Song suddenly noticed something, and his eyes narrowed in astonishment. "They... are not doing this on purpose. It looks more like... they have been poisoned!"

He knew full well that his men wouldn't ever go easy on an opponent just because she was a beautiful lady. There was only one possibility in this scenario, and that was that... they had been poisoned!

But he had been watching the situation closely all along. From the start to the end, Wei Ruyan had been suppressed by their might, and there should have been no opportunity for her to poison them at all.

Furthermore, the rules of the Dragon Gate Formation forbade the usage of poison in the trial. The headquarters had been supervising the duel from above, and if Wei Ruyan had indeed resorted to such underhanded tricks, they would have terminated the trial immediately.

The fact that this hadn't happened only meant that Wei Ruyan's act of poisoning her opponent was considered a part of her strength, and the duel was completely fair and honest!

But how could this possibly be true?

Liao Song felt so frenzied by the absurd situation before him that he nearly tore his hair out.

"We reminded Junior Ruyan to curb it, but it seems like it is futile," Liu Yang remarked with a bitter smile.

They were all aware that Wei Ruyan possessed the Innate Poison Body and Poison Soul Constitution, and this was also why they weren't worried about sending Wei Ruyan up.

Nevertheless, poison was still something typically shunned and feared on the Master Teacher Continent, so they had advised Wei Ruyan to keep her poison in check wherever possible. However, from the looks of it... they might have been underestimating the potency of Wei Ruyan's unique constitution.

Innate Poison Body and Poison Soul Constitution... It could be said that Wei Ruyan's very existence was a lethal poison, be it her body or her zhenqi. Wei Ruyan had been trying to curb her poison consciously, but nevertheless, it was still able to easily render the combat masters, who possessed superior physical resilience, powerless.

"Those three are going to lose..." Wang Ying nodded grimly, and before she could finish her words, 'Putong! Putong! Putong!', the three combat masters collapsed to the ground with white foam trickling from their mouths.

"First section, cleared!"

With the three of them incapacitated, Wei Ruyan proceeded forward to the next section, the Dragon's Back, without any hesitation.

"Demoness, what kind of sorcery did you pull?"

The three combat masters of the Dragon's Back glared at Wei Ruyan warily as if they were facing a powerful enemy, not daring to look down on her in the least.

"Sorcery? I did nothing of the sort." Shaking her head, Wei Ruyan said, "Let's begin!"

After saying those words, she immediately charged forward and shrouded the three combat masters with her zhenqi.

Her attack was extremely crude, devoid of any technique at all, but the sheer potency of the poison contained in her zhenqi could easily fell any opponent that came into contact with it. Not even deities were an exception to the rule.

This was also the reason the Innate Poison Body was such a feared existence in the world.

Putong! Putong! Putong!

Not too long later, the three combat masters of the Dragon's Back fell to the ground with white foam flowing down their chins.

In less than five minutes, a delicate young lady, who had only cultivated for two months and had no knowledge of wielding a weapon or any battle techniques, had already cleared two sections.

After defeating the three combat masters, Wei Ruyan moved on to the Dragon's Head.

Five minutes later, the three combat masters of the Dragon's Head were lying on the floor as well.

They were indeed significantly stronger than Wei Ruyan, but in the face of the potent poison released by her, it didn't take long before they collapsed to the ground, powerless.

"She... really cleared the trial?" Having watched the entire scene, Liao Song was on the verge of tears.

At this point, a certain thought surfaced in his mind, and he couldn't help but tremble.

Could it be that the strength of their combat masters was really a joke?

Author's Note: The seventh arc, *Zhang laoshi's Students* , has come to an end. The next arc, *Kong shi's Warning,* is about to begin, so look forward to it!

Volume 9 - Kong shi's Warning

Chapter 969

Returning to the Surface

He had just said that their combat masters were powerful, and the next moment, they had been utterly defeated by two youths.

It was one thing for the young man, considering that he was strong, but the young lady had only started cultivating two months ago, completely ignorant of battle techniques.

The moment they stepped into the academy, they had been subdued by ordinary students of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy. After which, the incredibly difficult Dragon Gate Formation, which only a handful of their countless combat masters had cleared in the past three hundred years, ended up being overcome by two challengers consecutively.

Honestly speaking, he was starting to doubt life itself.

Principal Zhang, even if you are really formidable and powerful, surely you need not tear us apart so callously!

It is one thing for you to be so powerful, but even students that you have casually taught are so formidable as well! What does that make us combat masters?

Just as Liao Song was still feeling frustrated over the matter, Wang Ying suddenly spoke. "Combat Master Liao, it seems like... your men are unable to carry on with the next trial. What about the both of us?"

It was then that Liao Song suddenly recalled that the nine combat masters on the stage were still unconscious from poison.

In the past trials, it had always been their combat masters knocking others unconscious. Yet, the other party had only sent two students up, and their men were already either knocked unconscious or severely injured.

Liao Song couldn't help but feel his heart turn cold.

He pondered for a moment before replying. "Our men need to rest for time being. We will resume the trial in three days! Just in case, we will bring in some more combat masters from the Combat Master Hall as well."

There was nothing else he could do.

His nine subordinates were clearly under the effects of a very potent poison. Even if he were to treat them right now, they would still need several days to fully recover to their peak.

If their strength was already compromised before the start of the battle, the results of the trial would be inaccurate, and the headquarters might not be willing to recognize it.

Since that was the case, it would be best to first rest for several days and request for more men to be dispatched to serve as back up.

It couldn't be that the great Combat Master Hall couldn't even deal with a couple of students.

"Alright!" After a moment of hesitation, Wang Ying nodded.

Zheng Yang had succeeded due to the preparation he had made beforehand, and Wei Ruyan had her unique constitution to fall back on. On the other hand, she and Liu Yang had neither of the two. If they were to depend solely on their strength, it would be too difficult for them to clear the trial.

If they had three additional days, perhaps their teacher might have returned by then. They would be able to seek guidance from him, and their chances at clearing the trial would be significantly higher.

It was not that their fighting prowess was beneath Zheng Yang's, but many of their moves and maneuvers had been exposed to the combat masters in the earlier fight, and the combat masters were bound to be guarded against them in future fights.

Without the element of surprise, it would be hard for them to succeed.

On the other hand, seeing that Wang Ying had agreed to it, Liao Song heaved a sigh of relief. If the other party were to insist on challenging the trial that instant but they were unable to come up with the required numbers for it, that would be truly

humiliating for the Combat Master Hall.

"That was truly exciting!"

"After watching such an incredible battle, I can pass away without any regrets!"

"As expected of Principal Zhang's direct disciple, that Zheng Yang is indeed powerful!"

"Of course! Just think about how formidable Principal Zhang is, how can his student be ordinary?"

Only two trials had been held, and many people were unable to comprehend the happenings in Wei Ruyan's trial, but nevertheless, Zheng Yang's battle had still been incredibly exciting. The many cultivators who had travelled from far and wide to spectate the battle couldn't help but feel that their trip hadn't been wasted. They had managed to witness the birth of a new legend with their own eyes.

"I wonder what the conditions are to becoming Principal Zhang's direct disciple."

"If it is possible, I would love to become his direct disciple, too."

There were also quite a few among the crowd who began to contemplate about how they could become Principal Zhang's direct disciple and ascend to the top in a single step. Even the candidates of the other three academies who had failed to clear the Combat Master Selection couldn't help but harbor such thoughts as they gazed at Zheng Yang with an excited gleam in their eyes.

At this very moment, however, the man whom they wanted to acknowledge as their teacher was currently still within the depths of the Subterranean Gallery, seated within the seal with his eyes closed.

After some time, he finally opened his eyes.

Just a little more!

Exhaling deeply, Zhang Xuan got to his feet.

The previous few days spent recultivating the Saint Ascension Decipher, which had been modified according to the structure of the seal, while repairing the seal had enhanced his strength by leaps and bounds. While his cultivation was still at Nascent

Saint pinnacle, the same as before, the fighting prowess he could exert was far greater than before.

At the same time, his Origin Core had also become even stabler and sturdier, revolving slowly within his dantian in the form of a golden sphere. At this point, he was already at the final step of his cultivation, lacking just the final decipher.

According to Zhang Xuan's deduction, he would need to take in vast amounts of spiritual energy as soon as this step was completed, and that could destabilize the seal if he were to do it within. Thus, he decisively halted his cultivation.

Hu!

Zhang Xuan leaped out from the interior of the seal.

The seal didn't pose much of an impediment to humans, but to the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, it was no different from a barrier severing space, making it nigh impossible for them to cross through it.

Returning to the Subterranean Gallery, Zhang Xuan quickly found himself a safe location. Taking out his formation flags, he set up a grade-6 Spirit Gathering Formation with a snap of his fingers. After which, he took a seat at the center, tossed a few hundred high-tier spirit stones around him, and began to cultivate.

With the spoils of war from slaying the two hundred Otherworldly Demons and the profits he had obtained from the Shen Clan, he had no lack of high-tier spirit stones at the moment. Besides, as long as he could raise his strength, there was no price too heavy to pay.

Taking a deep breath, Zhang Xuan opened his acupoints, and the surrounding spiritual energy immediately gushed into his body with furious momentum, creating a whirlpool of spiritual energy around him.

The vast amount of spiritual energy was swiftly converted into zhenqi before being gathered together to be crafted into a decipher through a unique method, filling up the last remaining gap of the golden sphere.

Hong long!

After some time, with a resounding blast, the spiritual energy in the Spirit Gathering

Formation was abruptly dried out in an instant, and the hundreds of high-tier spirit stones were reduced to dust. Following which, Zhang Xuan felt his dantian jolt violently. The golden sphere underwent a metamorphosis as a deep shade of violet crept onto it.

This violet Origin Core carried a weight reminiscent of an entire planet, granting one immense strength as it revolved slowly on the spot.

What a powerful Origin Core... Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up as he clenched his fists tightly in excitement.

He could clearly feel his perception of the surrounding spiritual energy becoming even clearer and more vivid, allowing him to tap into it and refine it into zhenqi far more efficiently.

In other words, with this violet Origin Core, he could cultivate zhenqi far quicker and purer than before.

Could this be... a First Grade Origin Core? Zhang Xuan's eyes trembled in agitation.

He had already achieved a Second Grade Pinnacle Origin Core before. While there was nothing detailed in the Saint Ascension Decipher about an Origin Core metamorphosing into a violet sphere, chances were that it was a First Grade Origin Core!

In the entire history of the Master Teacher Continent, Kong shi was the only one known to have successfully formed a First Grade Origin Core. It wielded strength far beyond the others, and it was the key to becoming a Celestial Saint!

It is a pity that I am still lacking the catalyst artifact, or else I would be able to attempt a breakthrough to Saint realm on the spot.

The more Zhang Xuan studied the violet Origin Core in his body and learned about it, the more impressed he felt.

Currently, his comprehension of the Saint Ascension Decipher still had a few flaws. He needed Scarlet Firefly Fruits for a breakthrough to Half-Saint, a Lightning Resonance Stone for a breakthrough to Nascent Saint, and the Seven-colored Earth Jade Essence for a breakthrough to Saint realm.

This artifact was only found in the depths of an earth vein, and it was even rarer than the Earth Vein Spirit Essence. Even despite the many treasures and huge fortune that he had accumulated, he had never seen the Seven-colored Earth Jade Essence before.

Without this catalyst artifact, he wouldn't be able to reach Saint realm.

Seems like I can only search for it patiently.

While Zhang Xuan did not have it, it didn't mean that Hongyuan Empire didn't have it. After leaving the Subterranean Gallery, he could take his time looking for it.

If worst came to worst, he could always apply for it from the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters.

Having guarded mankind for several dozen millenniums, what artifacts would the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters possibly not have in their treasure vault?

As long as one had an ample amount of contribution and wealth, one could exchange for anything existing on the Master Teacher Continent with the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters.

I am done repairing the seal, and the invading Otherworldly Demons have been killed as well. It is about time for me to return.

Getting to his feet, Zhang Xuan stretched his back lazily before storing the formation flags. After which, he took one more glance at the seal and heaved a sigh of relief.

Over the past few days of hard work, he had mended the weakened areas of the formation perfectly. With that, it would be difficult for the Otherworldly Demons to breach it again, regardless of whatever means they had on their hands.

It had been several days since he had gone down to the Subterranean Gallery, so it was about time for him to return.

The conditions in the Subterranean Gallery was indeed harsh. Just the concentrated killing intent in itself would make it difficult for any ordinary cultivator to catch their breath. Nevertheless, Zhang Xuan had still managed to make considerable gains in here. He had managed to advance his cultivation to Nascent Saint pinnacle and upgrade his Origin Core to First Grade, and these two gains were sufficient to make this trip worthwhile.

Furthermore, his Saint 1-dan puppets had been upgraded to Saint 3-dan, and this represented more cards he could use to help himself out of dire situations.

Flying back, Zhang Xuan didn't see Lu Feng and the others. He assumed that they had returned in advance after noticing that the threat from the Otherworldly Demons had been resolved, so he decided to head straight back.

Soon, he reached the area that he had arrived at the Subterranean Gallery from and used his spirit to communicate with the wills contained within the Mausoleum Tablet.

Hu!

A powerful suction force drew him in, and in the next moment, he was already standing back in the area within the Mausoleum Tablet.

Mu shi's will was waiting for him. He swiftly informed the other party about the situation in the Subterranean Gallery, and this left the other party astonished.

"This seal was set up by one of Kong shi's followers back then, and it has the laws of space tied into it. It is impossible to damage it without the strength of one who has reached the pinnacle of Saint realm. The other side of the seal links to an otherworldly battlefield known as the Qingtian Battlefield. It is said that the strongest Otherworldly Demon within possesses the strength of Saint 5-dan.

"Even Qingtian Conferred Empire would struggle to face an expert of that caliber. Fortunately, it is impossible for the Otherworldly Demons on the other side to breach the seal. This is also the reason the headquarters didn't station any personnel here. For them to be able to dispatch soldiers over to our side through certain means, that is truly unnerving!"

"There is no need to worry. I have already repaired the damaged seal..." Zhang Xuan began to speak about what he had encountered over the past few days.

Of course, the unique method he had used to repair the seal was conveniently attributed to 'Yang Xuan'. Otherwise, considering his current cultivation, there was no one who would possibly believe that he had been able to repair the seal.

"A person who is qualified to take a Celestial Master Teacher as his student can't possibly be someone simple. It is truly a pity that I am unable to meet your teacher and seek his guidance..." Mu shi lamented.

After chatting for a while longer, Zhang Xuan managed to reassure the wills of the preceding principal that the problem had been resolved. After which, he left the Mausoleum Tablet before making his way out of the Mausoleum of Principals.

As soon as he was out, he saw School Head Zhao and School Head Mo waiting for him outside with worry on their faces.

Seeing their expression, Zhang Xuan frowned. "What is wrong?"

"Principal Zhang... Why did it take you so long to return?" School Head Zhao asked.

"After entering, I suddenly had a moment of inspiration, so I remained inside to make a breakthrough," Zhang Xuan replied with the excuse he had already come up with in advance.

In order to avoid unneeded fear and panic, it was best for as few people as possible to learn about the matter regarding the Subterranean Gallery and the Otherworldly Demons.

"Breakthrough?"

School Head Zhao and School Head Mo traded a glance as their mouth twitched with uncanny harmony. "Is... the Mausoleum of Principals still well? How great is the destruction? Does it need fixing? Sigh, what is done is done. Principal Zhang, you don't need to blame yourself for it."

It seemed that nothing good had ever happened whenever their principal cultivated.

Take the Blacksmith School for example, the Chamber of Earth Flame and Passageway of Records had ended up collapsing due to him cultivating his physical body.

"Destruction? Blame myself?"

It was only at this moment that Zhang Xuan finally comprehended what the two school heads were worried about, and he couldn't help but fall speechless.

For someone as reliable and dependable as him to be misunderstood like that... That was utter nonsense!

Are the both of you fine?

Are you really my subordinates?

Chapter 970

Mu shi Returns

After explaining for a very long time and emphasizing time and time again that the Mausoleum of Principals was completely unharmed, the duo was still looking at him with a look of doubt. Eventually, Zhang Xuan could only shake his head in frustration and give up on the matter.

It would suffice for him to know that he hadn't done anything wrong. For someone as upright and flawless as him, the world would eventually return him justice.

"Principal Zhang, in the five days you have been gone for, the personnel from the Combat Master Hall arrived, and Zheng Yang and Wei Ruyan cleared their trial..." Putting aside the matter regarding the Mausoleum of Principals, School Head Mo quickly filled Zhang Xuan in on the matters that had happened over the past few days.

At the end of which, Zhang Xuan gestured with a slight nod.

As his direct disciple, it was within his expectations that Zheng Yang would be able to clear the trial. However, he hadn't really expected Wei Ruyan to be able to clear it as well. From the looks of it, it seemed like there was really nothing impressive about the combat masters!

After asking about several problems concerning the academy and proposing various measures to deal with them, Zhang Xuan finally returned to his residence under the lead of the two school heads.

As the principal, it would be a breach of etiquette if he didn't pay the guests from the Combat Master Hall and the three Master Teacher Academies a visit at least once in the duration of their stay.

Thus, he had the servants to prepare a bath for him so that he could wash and tidy himself up to greet the combat masters. However, before he could do so, his butler, Sun Qiang, abruptly rushed into the residence with hurried footsteps.

"Young Master!" Sun Qiang quickly ran up to Zhang Xuan upon seeing him.

"What's wrong?" Zhang Xuan asked.

Having followed him for some time, Sun Qiang was well aware that he hated trouble. As such, Sun Qiang would usually deal with most matters himself, not troubling him except for matters that were particularly important. Thus, for Sun Qiang to suddenly rush over with such an anxious look on his face, it could only mean that something severe had happened.

"Young Mistress Ruyan, she... has fainted again!" Sun Qiang quickly reported.

"Ruyan fainted?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

That shouldn't be!

After being nurtured by the Bodhi Saint Tree, Wei Ruyan's soul should have been no different from that of an ordinary person, significantly stronger and more resilient even.

Her body had also been nourished by the Grade-7 Grand Intermittence Pill, restoring it back to full health. On top of that, she had also cultivated a simplified version of the Heaven's Path Divine Art. For one who had the strength to defeat even the combat masters easily, why would she faint so abruptly?

"I am not too sure about the reason behind it either. That day, when we returned to our manor after defeating the combat masters, she said that she felt unwell, and shortly after, she fell ill," Sun Qiang replied.

"Lead me there!" Knowing that it would be impossible for him to determine the cause of Wei Ruyan's illness just by listening to Sun Qiang's words, Zhang Xuan clasped his fist to bid School Head Mo and the others farewell before heading hurriedly back to his manor.

Entering Wei Ruyan's room, Zhang Xuan saw that she was lying on the bed with a tight frown on her forehead, unconscious. Wang Ying was seated by the side of her bed, taking care of her diligently.

There were various plants in the courtyard outside the room, but at this moment, they were all dry and withered, as if heralding the arrival of winter.

"What is going on?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

"Teacher, you are finally back..." Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, Wang Ying hurriedly stood up.

Raising his hand to gesture that it wasn't the time for questions, Zhang Xuan hurriedly walked up to Wei Ruyan and placed his fingers on her pulse.

A moment later, Zhang Xuan's face turned grim, and he lifted his gaze and asked, "I need a detailed recount about the fight Ruyan had with the combat masters that day!"

"Yes! That day, Junior Ruyan went onto the stage to battle, and through exerting her zhenqi, she poisoned all nine of the combat masters in the trial..." Wang Ying went through everything that happened that day without hiding anything.

While School Head Mo and the others knew that Wei Ruyan had defeated the combat masters through using poison, they weren't aware of her Innate Poison Body. As such, their explanation had lacked crucial details.

On the other hand, Wang Ying was able to explain everything that had happened clearly, reconstructing the scene from back then perfectly.

After finishing the recount, Wang Ying looked at Zhang Xuan anxiously and asked, "Teacher, how is she?"

With a deep frown, Zhang Xuan replied, "It isn't anything severe. It seems like the might she exerted through the Innate Poison Body then exceeded her current limits, resulting in her loss of consciousness."

Wei Ruyan possessed not only the Innate Poison Body but also the Poison Soul Constitution. It was so rare that one wouldn't find another like her throughout the entire Master Teacher Continent in the next several dozen millenniums!

As long as she cultivated, the lethal poison contained within her zhenqi would be her strongest weapon against any foe!

Under normal circumstances, once she awakened her unique constitution, her cultivation and fighting prowess would raise swiftly, easily surpassing all of her peers.

However, there was a flaw to it. Every time she utilized the poison aura within her body, it would grow a little. The more she used it, the more poison aura she would accumulate.

If she couldn't find a good method to deal with it, it could lead to a dangerous amount of poison aura accumulating in her body, causing her to lose control of her power. If so, she could very well suffer a backlash and lose consciousness.

This was the current situation she was in. Despite her lacking strength, she had forcefully challenged the Dragon Gate Formation and exerted a strength beyond her physical limits. As a result, she had lost control over the poison aura within her body, causing a backlash from her Innate Poison Body.

Having only woken up two months ago, the only cultivation technique she had cultivated was a simplified version of the Heaven's Path Divine Art. She had zero knowledge about the cultivation techniques of poison masters, so she had no way of clearing away the overwhelming quantity of poison aura accumulated in her. Naturally, this led to her discomfort and eventual loss of consciousness.

"It is fortunate that she has very strong self-control. Otherwise, the entire Hongyuan City might be harmed due to the sheer prowess of her Innate Poison Body..." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

Just the fact that the powerful combat masters were unable to withstand her poison zhenqi went to show how potent her poison was. Had it not been for her determined will, suppressing the poison aura firmly even after losing consciousness, the poison aura could potentially have spread through the entire city via the wind and harmed countless innocent lives.

It was also due to the difficulty in controlling the Innate Poison Body that the world had named it the 'Constitution of Disaster', leaving many fearful to approach.

For one, despite trying her best to suppress her poison aura, the plants in the courtyard still withered during the corrosion of the poison due to their proximity to her, resulting in the sight Zhang Xuan saw before entering the room.

It was fortunate that Wei Ruyan had cultivated the simplified version of the Heaven's Path Divine Art, allowing her to conceal the unique properties of her Innate Poison Body perfectly. Otherwise, it could possibly have brought countless 'agents of righteousness' to their doorstep, and that would have been troublesome to deal with.

"Teacher, what do we do now?" Hearing the explanation, Wang Ying's face paled.

After witnessing the sheer prowess of Wei Ruyan's unique constitution, she had

envied the other party for a very long time. However, upon seeing this, she realized that, rather than a blessing, it was a curse.

Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before replying. "I will try to neutralize of the poison aura within her body to alleviate the pressure on her body for the time being. However, to resolve the problem for good, I think that we might have to make a journey to the Poison Hall."

Despite Zhang Xuan's exceptional mastery in the Way of Medicine, it was still beyond his means to deduce a feasible method for Wei Ruyan to resolve the problem regarding her poison aura once and for all. The only people who could do so were probably the experts in the field of poison—the Poison Hall.

They had the most perfect heritage in the field of poison, as well as records regarding the Innate Poison Body. Perhaps, they might have a way for one to utilize the prowess of the Innate Poison Body without accumulating poison aura as well.

"Poison Hall?" Wang Ying was taken aback for a moment before eventually nodding in realization.

This seemed to be the only solution they had.

Zhang Xuan placed his hand on Wei Ruyan's pulse and slowly infused his Heaven's Path zhenqi in the latter's body. Time passed, but the frown on Zhang Xuan's forehead only seemed to deepen further.

He had thought that he could easily resolve the problem regarding the accumulation of poison aura through neutralizing it with his Heaven's Path zhenqi, but his thoughts had been too naive.

The poison aura accumulated in Wei Ruyan's body was fused together with her Innate Poison Body and Poison Soul Constitution. If he were to attempt to neutralize the poison aura forcefully, it might potentially cause significant harm to Wei Ruyan's body and soul, or in the worst-case scenario, result in her demise!

Another possible solution Zhang Xuan had thought of was to draw her poison aura out with his Heaven's Path zhenqi. The chances of a fatality were lower in that case, but it would deal significant damage to her body as well.

In other words, regardless of whether he chose to neutralize the poison aura or draw

it out, it wouldn't be good for the unconscious Wei Ruyan.

It seems like I can only hurry to the Poison Hall!

Zhang Xuan tried to deduce other plausible solutions, but none of them were feasible. Frustrated, he rubbed his glabella forcefully.

Despite the many means as he had, his understanding of poison was still only at 2-star. On top of that, this was the first time he had encountered the Innate Poison Body.

If there was no viable treatment method at the moment, he would have to head to the Poison Hall to collect books and accrue more knowledge to work with.

It just so happens that I was intending to make a trip to the Poison Hall myself soon. I should bring the matter forward then.

Previously, in the Mausoleum of Principals, the old principal had left a message advising Zhang Xuan to pay a visit to the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall, so he had been intending to pay it a visit when he had time to root out the underlying dangers threatening the academy. However, given that Wei Ruyan was in a perilous condition, he would have to bring this plan ahead.

"Sun Qiang, here is a thousand high-tier spirit stones. I need you to obtain as much information about the Poison Hall in Hongyuan Empire as you can, as fast as possible!" Flicking his wrist, Zhang Xuan took out a pile of high-tier spirit stones and passed them over.

Even though the old principal had said that the Poison Hall was likely in the vicinity of Jingyuan City, it would still be safer to verify the information first.

Otherwise, he might end up making a wasted trip.

"Young Master, there is no need to spend spirit stones on this matter. I can just ask the Shen Clan about this. They manage quite a large medicinal herb business, so it is very likely that they may have some news regarding the Poison Hall in Hongyuan Empire," Sun Qiang replied.

As one of the Four Great Clans of Hongyuan City, the Shen Clan had business dealings all over the empire. One of their largest businesses was the sales of medicinal herbs. If the Poison Hall wished to concoct poison, they would surely need some connections

with medicinal herb dealers to procure the medicinal herbs they required. Perhaps, the Shen Clan might just have a relationship of some kind with the Poison Hall in Hongyuan Empire.

Had it been anyone else, and this included the old principal as well, it was unlikely that they would have been able to get information regarding the Poison Hall out of the Shen Clan. After all, the Shen Clan had a business to manage, and leaking information about the Poison Hall to others, especially master teachers, could very well sour their relationship with the Poison Hall.

However, Zhang Xuan was different. For one, the Shen Clan had already profited greatly from their dealings with him, and the potential he had shown thus far would make it worthwhile for them to risk getting on the wrong side of the Poison Hall for him. Thus, they were unlikely to hide the information regarding the Poison Hall from him.

"Alright, go and ask them about the matter." Zhang Xuan nodded.

In the field of maintaining interpersonal relationships and business dealings, he was not a match for Sun Qiang. Thus, it was better to leave this matter to the other party.

"Yes!" Sun Qiang nodded before backing out of the room.

After he left, Zhang Xuan was just about to ask Wang Ying about the details regarding Wei Ruyan's condition over the past two days when the ground abruptly trembled. The resounding chime of a bell boomed across every nook and cranny of Hongyuan City, seemingly summoning someone.

"The Assembly Bell?" Standing up, Zhang Xuan frowned.

The Assembly Bell was a bell that was used to gather master teachers together in times of emergency. Once it was tolled, all master teachers who heard it had to rush over regardless of where they were or what they were doing.

Listening closely, Zhang Xuan noted that the sound originated from the Master Teacher Academy, and he couldn't help but be slightly bewildered.

It had only been an hour since he had left the Master Teacher Academy, and the Assembly Bell had suddenly been rung. What could have happened within this short span of time?

Perplexed, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist, and a Communication Token appeared in his hands. School Head Mo had sent him a message.

"Qingyuan Conferred Empire, 7-star high-tier Master Teacher Wu Rufeng and Master Teacher Mu Hong have arrived at the academy. Please return quickly."

Mu shi has returned? Zhang Xuan fell into a moment of thought.

Back then, when he discovered that You Xu had betrayed humanity, he entrusted the latter to Mu Hong to investigate the matter. For Mu Hong to have returned at this moment, it was likely that this meant that the other party had uncovered something regarding the matter.

"I will head over right now!" Zhang Xuan replied through the Communication Token.

After which, he took out a few grade-6 pills and fed them to Wei Ruyan. These pills served to suppress the poison aura within her body so that it wouldn't harm those around her indiscriminately. Following that, he issued some instruction to Wang Ying before finally heading out.

It didn't take long for him to return to the academy. At this point, all of the students, teachers, elders, and even the master teachers of the Hongyuan Empire Master Teacher Pavilion had gathered on the academy's training ground, looking at one another with puzzled expressions on their faces, unsure of what was going on.

Translator's Thoughts

StarveCleric

Just to re-emphasize for those who might have lost track.

Most occupations are ranked primary, intermediate, advanced, and pinnacle (e.g. 4-star advanced beast tamer)

For master teachers, however, from 5-star onwards, they are divided by low-tier, high-tier, and pinnacle. This is so as to allow each stage to correspond to a cultivation realm. Of course, the other abilities must also meet the mark as well, such as their Soul Depth, eye of discernment etc. It doesn't seem like there is any formal test, so it might just be an informal assessment.

E.g.

Cosmos Bridge realm 5-star low-tier

Perfect Harmonization 5-star high-tier

Ethereal Treading 5-star pinnacle

Chrysalis half 6-star

Half-Saint 6-star low-tier

Nascent Saint 6-star high-tier

Saint realm 1-dan Void Pursuit realm 6-star pinnacle

Translator comments are not considered within the word count and won't be charged.

Chapter 971

Dealing with You Xu

"Principal Zhang!"

As soon as Zhang Xuan arrived at the training grounds, School Head Mo and the others immediately walked up to him.

Responding with a nod, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze to the stage and saw Mu shi and an elder standing on top.

The elder beside Mu shi seemed to be in his fifties, and he possessed a powerful cultivation that felt as vast as the ocean, similar to the sensation he had felt from the Goldenleaf King and Greenleaf King back in the Subterranean Gallery—Saint 4-dan.

Saint 3-dan Embryonic Soul realm was also known as the Origin Soul realm. At this point, one's Origin Core would metamorphose from a core into the form of an infant. Upon reaching this realm, one's comprehension of the world would deepen, and with each breath, one could take in the energy contained in the world and wield it for one's use.

In Saint 4-dan Primordial Spirit realm, a cultivator's Origin Soul would evolve into a Primordial Spirit 1.

Any cultivator that had reached the Primordial Spirit realm was extremely difficult to kill due to the unique nature of their existence. This was also the reason Zhang Xuan had chosen to turn the two Kings against one another, inciting them to kill one another. Otherwise, it would have been difficult for him to eliminate all of the Otherworldly Demons in the Subterranean Gallery so easily.

Surprisingly, the master teacher beside Mu shi had also reached such a level. Even in view of the entire Qingyuan Conferred Empire, he could be considered one of the strongest experts. Why would a person as powerful as him come down to Hongyuan Empire?

Zhang Xuan sent a telepathic message to School Head Mo. "This must be the person

you told me about earlier, 7-star high-tier Master Teacher Wu Rufeng."

"Yes." School Head Mo nodded. "He is the vice head of the Qingyuan Conferred Empire Master Teacher Pavilion. He is an austere person who abhors all evil..."

While School Head Mo was in the midst of introducing the man on the stage to Zhang Xuan, the person in question glanced coldly downward with his hands behind his back. "School Head Mo, is your principal here yet? To keep all of us waiting like this, he sure knows how to put on airs!"

Seeing that Wu Shi already had a bad impression of him, a bitter smile crept on Zhang Xuan's lips. Stepping forward, he bowed politely and said, "I believe... I am the principal who knows how to put on airs that you are speaking of."

After receiving the news, he had needed to spend some time feeding Wei Ruyan some pills to stabilize her condition, so he had ended up arriving late. Judging from the state of those in the area, it seemed like they had already been here for some time.

"You are the principal here?" Wu Shi took a glance at Zhang Xuan, and his eyebrows shot up. "Nascent Saint pinnacle? It seems like the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy has truly fallen!"

Coming from the headquarters, he had heard that the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy had eventually inaugurated a twenty-year-old young man to serve as their principal, so he was curious to see who the other party was. But he hadn't expected that after arriving in the academy for some time, the other party would still be nowhere in sight.

Even after ringing the Assembly Bell, the other party had only arrived around thirty minutes later... More importantly, his clothes were still completely cloaked with dust...

This was blatant disrespect toward him!

On top of that, the other party was only at Nascent Saint realm pinnacle, not even reaching Saint realm yet. A person with such weak cultivation had actually been inaugurated as the principal of a Master Teacher Academy?

Wasn't this taking this matter way too lightly?

Mu Shi had left prior to the inauguration ceremony, so he was unaware that Zhang

Xuan had tamed the spirit beasts and saint beasts of the Cloudmist Ridge. Furthermore, with other more important matters to attend to, Mu shi had neglected to inform Wu shi about the various outstanding accomplishments that Zhang Xuan had accomplished, which could easily dim the radiance of the preceding principals.

"Wu shi..." Upon hearing those words, Mu shi quickly whispered to Wu shi in a hushed voice, "Zhang shi is a very talented individual, and he has the guidance of a very powerful teacher..."

"Humph!"

But before Mu shi could finish his words, Wu shi had already interrupted him with a darkened face. "Regardless of how powerful his teacher may be, he must be strong himself as well!

"Enough, let's not waste our time on this matter any further. Principal Zhang, you are to write a reflective letter regarding your lack of respect and your mistakes, or else I will have you punished for your breach of responsibility."

"Reflective letter?" Zhang Xuan was dumbfounded.

Those two words felt so far away... To think that a day would come when a principal would have to write a reflective essay!

But this fellow... To be going after him when he had barely arrived in the area, it was obvious that the other party was trying to establish his authority through him.

It was one thing if Zhang Xuan had offended the other party in the past, but he hadn't even met the other party before! Why was the other party trying to pick faults with him?

Zhang Xuan scratched his head and sighed deeply. If the other party was truly determined to find faults with him, perhaps he really should consider bringing out his puppets to teach the other party some respect first.

"Wu shi..." While Zhang Xuan was still contemplating the issue, Mu shi hurriedly said, "Principal Zhang was only inaugurated three months ago, and more importantly, he is the one who captured..."

Interrupting Mu shi's explanation, Wu shi waved his hands impatiently. "Enough! For

a traitor to emerge from the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, he, as the principal, has a huge responsibility to bear. Hurry up and make the announcement, we still have more important matters to attend to afterwards!"

"...Yes!" Mu shi could only nod in response to that. Sighing deeply, he surveyed the crowd for a moment before speaking. "Everyone, the reason we have gathered you here is to make an important announcement."

"An important announcement?"

The master teachers beneath the stage glanced at one another in bewilderment.

For two 7-star master teachers to specially make the trip down to Hongyuan Empire and assemble them all, the announcement that they had to make was bound to be significant.

"Eliminating the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe has always been one of the core responsibilities of our Master Teacher Pavilion, and most master teachers view it as their mission as well. However, just as there are those who embrace this mission, there are also those who attempt to undermine it for the sake of their own petty gains!" At this point, Mu shi's face turned grim and austere.

"If it was an ordinary cultivator who had betrayed mankind, as well as their kin and friends, in face of possible death, it would be abhorrent but understandable. After all, the fear of death is not something that just anyone can overcome. However, as master teachers respected by countless others, if we can't even hold onto our faith in dire situations, that is unforgivable!

"To put it lightly, that is equivalent to losing our pride and dignity. To put it harshly, that is the betrayal of humanity!" Mu shi's voice echoed resoundingly across the training grounds.

"Betrayal of humanity?"

"That's indeed true. The respect that we, master teachers, are accorded comes with a responsibility. We bear the mission of leading mankind through crises and toward prosperity. If we can't persist in our faith in times of trouble, who else will?"

The many master teachers beneath the stage nodded in agreement.

While enjoying the elevated standing and privileges that mankind had bestowed upon them, master teachers had to shoulder a responsibility equivalent to that.

Mankind had to pay a heavy price to groom every single high-ranked master teacher. As such, the betrayal of a master teacher in times of crises was intolerable.

"Silence! Today, I am going to talk about a certain master teacher who has betrayed mankind."

Seeing that he had managed to draw everyone's mood along with him, Mu shi waved his hands grandly and continued. "For his own safety, this man has disregarded the values that we, master teachers, embrace and plunged more than twenty 6-star pinnacle master teachers into a dangerous position. To date, we don't even know whether they are still alive or not! These twenty 6-star master teachers were his comrades and friends, but he abandoned them without the slightest bit of remorse. After the incident, he even dared to shamelessly return to the Master Teacher Academy and preach values to others, enjoying the resources and respect of others... How do you think we should deal with such a person?"

"There is such a person among us? Kill him!"

"His betrayal is an intolerable crime. There are no grounds for negotiation at all!"

"To plunge more than twenty 6-star master teachers into a dangerous position, his crime is so great that even killing him several times over won't cleanse him of his sins!"

"Mu shi, who is the person you are speaking of? Is he a teacher of our Master Teacher Academy?"

...

Upon hearing the question, a huge uproar broke out beneath the stage.

For the two 7-star master teachers to talk about betrayal and preaching morals, it was clear that the person whom they were going to judge was related to the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy.

Instead of answering the crowd's question, Mu shi flung his sleeves and said with his head held high, "Bring him in!"

Shortly after those words were uttered, the cry of a saint beast sounded from the sky, and a Saint realm Tigereagle Beast swooped down. With a shake of its body, a human fell heavily onto the ground.

"That is... Vice School Head You Xu?"

"It is indeed Vice School Head You Xu! Could he be the traitor of humanity?"

"Wasn't he taken away by Principal Zhang after losing to the latter in a Life-and-Death Physician Duel? Why is he here?"

"In the past two years, he has remained cooped up within the Master Teacher Academy, devoting his time to nurturing medicinal herbs in his residence. How could he possibly have the opportunity to collude with the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe?"

"I have even attended his lessons before. Back then, when Principal Zhang challenged him to a Life-and-Death Physician Duel, I even felt great animosity toward Principal Zhang for a period of time."

Upon getting a clear glimpse of the person who had appeared on the stage, a huge uproar broke out amid the crowd. Everyone widened their eyes in disbelief.

Three months ago, when Principal Zhang challenged You Xu, there had been quite a few who were sympathetic to You Xu's plight, thinking that it was disrespectful for Principal Zhang to have challenged an esteemed elder regardless of how capable he was. Who could have thought that he would actually be a traitor of humanity?

For the Qingyuan Conferred Empire Master Teacher Pavilion to dispatch two 7-star master teachers over to announce this before them, they had to have concrete evidence on hand. There was no doubt about it anymore.

"I believe all of you should know this man very well even if I don't say much about it!" Mu shi glanced at the feeble You Xu collapsed on the ground and harrumphed coldly. "Do you want to explain it to them yourself, or shall I have the Teacher Guild's 'Guild Letter' do the job?"

The Master Teacher Pavilion could be considered a subsidiary of the Teacher Guild. A Guild Letter from it was comparable to the imperial edict of an emperor. Any declaration made through the Guild Letter would be automatically recorded into the records of the Teacher Guild and Master Teacher Pavilion, allowing all branches to

browse through the information.

To put it simply, if his crimes were to be indicted through the Guild Letter, it would be as good as being judged guilty before the world. There would be no possible redemption for him.

"I..." You Xu's lips quivered.

If he were to admit it himself, only those who were present in the area would learn of the matter. But if a Guild Letter were to be issued, his misdeeds would be recorded in all of the Teacher Guild and Master Teacher Pavilion branches over the Master Teacher Continent, and his name would be spat at for countless years to come.

Without hesitating for too long, You Xu nodded. "I will explain it to them."

Since he had already long admitted to his crimes, there was nothing for him to hide anymore.

"Alright then, go on!" Mu shi waved his hand disdainfully.

"Yes." Gritting his teeth, You Xu began his explanation. "It is my fault. I was the one who placed our old principal into a dangerous position..."

Soon, he swiftly repeated everything that he had confessed to Zhang Xuan back then.

This time, his account was even more detailed. By the time he finished his story, the master teachers assembled in the area already had their fists clenched tightly together, and veins popped from their temples.

"Kill him!"

"I truly didn't expect You Xu to be such a person. He is truly a black sheep of the master teachers!"

"It is laughable that I attended his lecture and thought of him as a respectable elder. This is going to become the greatest stain on my life!"

"Principal Zhang must have noticed that there was something wrong with You Xu, that was why he challenged the latter to a Life-and-Death Physician Duel so as to investigate his case and hand him over to Mu shi!"

"Now that you speak of it, that does seem to be very possible. If not for Principal Zhang, we might still have been kept in the dark by that scoundrel!"

...

All of the master teachers beneath the stage were enraged, and they roared furiously.

Betraying mankind for the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, obeying their orders to harm his own comrades, causing the old principal to go missing and the entire Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy to descend into chaos...

Just as Mu shi had said, this was an unforgivable crime!

"Since you have already admitted to your crime, I won't say anything else about it. Now, I shall announce the verdict made by the Qingyuan Empire Master Teacher Pavilion."

Facing the enraged crowd, Mu shi took out a scroll and gently rolled it open.

Huala!

A brilliant flash of light burst in the air, and an emotionless voice reverberated in the air.

"You Xu, for betraying mankind and harming his fellow master teachers, has infringed on the rules of the Master Teacher Pavilion and transgressed the bottom line of a master teacher. For his crimes, he shall be stripped of his identity as a master teacher and beheaded to serve as a warning to others!"

"Beheaded?"

Upon hearing the verdict, You Xu's face paled as he collapsed weakly to the ground. As if having lost his soul, the light in his eyes vanished.

Chapter 972

Seniority

Seeing his state, Zhang Xuan shook his head.

Since he knew that such fate would befall him, he never should have done what he did back then.

It was only natural for mortals to fear death, but to collude with the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was equivalent to giving up on the justice in one's heart.

Justice and life, there was no saying which was more important. But since You Xu had made his choice, he would have to bear the price of failure.

It is a pity that Wei Ruyan is unconscious at the moment and is unable to witness this.

You Xu was the mastermind behind Wei Changfeng's death, and as Wei Changfeng's daughter, it was indeed regretful that Wei Ruyan was unable to witness the death of her enemy with her own eyes.

This public execution served to indicate the Master Teacher Pavilion's attitude toward all traitors. As this was a decision made by the headquarters, Zhang Xuan had no right to intervene.

Besides, You Xu had already lived for long enough; it was about time for him to accept his punishment.

...

After dealing with You Xu, Mu shi turned to the others and said, "The four principals, Combat Master Liao, Combat Master Zhuo, and fellow elders, the two of us have come down here today to discuss something with you. Please follow me!"

"Yes."

Nodding in response, the crowd followed Mu shi to the Elder Hall.

In truth, he had been puzzled as to why the headquarters would dispatch two 7-star master teachers to Hongyuan Empire, not to mention, one of them was even at Saint realm 4-dan. If it was just to deal with You Xu, there was no such need.

There was bound to be some other reason.

Mu shi had stayed in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy from a fairly long period of time before, so he was rather familiar with the area. It didn't take long for the crowd to arrive in the large assembly room.

After everyone got seated, School Head Mo activated the formation to isolate the room. After which, Mu shi shot a sweeping gaze at the crowd before speaking. "The reason I had all of you gather here today is due to a piece of information we have received while interrogating You Xu."

After saying that, Mu shi flicked his wrist, and a token appeared in his hand.

The token was incredibly worn and damaged, and it seemed as if it would break apart at any moment.

"I believe all of you should recognize this!" Mu shi said.

"Is that a Principal's Seal?" Zhang Xuan asked with a frown.

The token might have been worn and damaged, but he could still clearly feel the reinforcement of countless wills within. It was similar to the Principal's Seal in his possession, just that it looked a bit shabbier.

"Indeed. This is a Principal's Seal, the one belonging to the old principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, Zhang Yinqiu!" Mu shi explained.

"The Principal's Seal of our old principal? Could it be..."

Upon hearing Mu shi's words, School Head Mo was stunned for a moment before his face flushed in agitation. "He... is still alive?"

School Head Zhao and the others also swiftly turned their gazes at Mu shi anxiously.

While they had already recognized Zhang Xuan as the new principal, they had spent some time with the old principal and viewed him as a close friend. Thus, when they

heard the news, they couldn't curb their agitation.

"I can't say for certain whether he is dead or not, but someone forcefully sent this item out from the ancient domain," Mu shi replied grimly.

"Forcefully sent this item out? What does that mean? Mu shi, can you explain it in more detail?" Zhang Xuan asked.

Mu shi nodded as he recalled the matter. "After bringing You Xu back to the headquarters that day, we interrogated him and found the location of the ancient domain that the old principal had gone missing in. Thus, we dispatched some men to take a look.

"However, when we arrived at the area where the ancient domain was located, we realized that it was located at an area with a complicated geographical terrain that seemed to obey some kind of rhythm. Based on our deduction, the ancient domain only opens at certain times, and once the moment passes, one can only wait for the next instance. While our men were calculating the ideal timing to enter the ancient domain, this token abruptly flew out of the ancient domain!"

Hearing those words, School Head Mo's face flushed in agitation. "Mu shi, are you saying that the Principal's Seal flew out from the ancient domain that our old principal disappeared in?"

"That's right." Mu shi nodded.

"Then..." School Head Mo's breathing hastened. "Doesn't that mean that the Principal's Seal was sent out by the old principal?"

It had been only around three months since You Xu was captured, and the Principal's Seal had been found. This meant that there was a good chance that the old principal was still alive at this point!

Perhaps, he might have been trapped in a certain location of the ancient domain, unable to escape. That would explain why he had forcefully sent his Principal's Seal out, hoping that aid would be sent for him.

"I am not sure about the situation within the ancient domain. It could also be that the old principal might have released the Principal's Seal two years ago, and it only appeared once more after sensing the aura of a master teacher in the vicinity!" Mu shi

wasn't as optimistic about the situation as School Head Mo.

"This..." Everyone fell silent.

Mu shi's words made sense as well. The Principal's Seal was created by the gathering of innumerable wills, granting it a certain level of sentience. If the old principal had released it after sensing the grave danger he was in, instructing it to remain hidden and only appear in the presence of master teachers... That was a viable explanation as well.

As such, the appearance of the Principal's Seal wasn't sufficient evidence to determine whether the old principal was still alive or not.

After a moment of hesitation, School Head Mo said, "Mu shi, where is the ancient domain that you spoke of? Can you tell us so that we can head over to take a look?"

No matter what, the old principal had been a friend to them for several hundred years. Knowing that there was a possibility that the other party could still be alive, they had to take a look regardless of the situation. Otherwise, their hearts would never be at peace.

"This is precisely the reason I gathered all of you here today." Mu shi looked at the crowd and said, "Based on our prior scouting, it is very likely that the ancient domain will open once more within a month. Thus, I hope to invite all of you to join the expedition. There are two main aims to this expedition. Firstly, we aim to find the old principal, and if he is still alive, we will attempt to save him. Secondly, the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe has been rather active recently, and we suspect that it might be closely tied to the ancient domain!"

Upon hearing those words, School Head Mo's eyes lit up, and he immediately replied without any hesitation.

"We will join the expedition!"

However, after saying those words, he realized that he was getting ahead of himself, so he hurriedly turned to Zhang Xuan and asked, "Principal Zhang..."

"School Head Mo is right. We have to go to the ancient domain to express the stand of our Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy," Zhang Xuan replied.

Back at the Mausoleum of Principals, when he heard the message left behind by the old principal, he had already made up his mind to take a look at the ancient domain. The incident with the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe at the Subterranean Gallery only served to strengthen his determination.

No matter what, he had to take a look. Otherwise, it would be hard for him to rest at ease.

"Good. What about the others?" Seemingly having known that this would be the outcome, Mu shi wasn't surprised in the least. He turned his gazes to the other three principals.

"Since the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe is involved in this matter, it is only right for us to stand up and offer our help too!"

Wo Tianqiong, Shen Pingchao, and Wu Ran nodded in agreement.

"How can our Combat Master Hall remain idle before such a situation?" Liao Song chuckled.

"Good, we have everyone onboard then. In one month, we will meet up at the ancient domain. Allow me to make things clear first. This expedition to the ancient domain will be very dangerous, or else Zhang Yinqiu and the others wouldn't have fallen in it. Even our headquarters don't have much information about it at the moment. There is a very good chance that we might be unable to return from this expedition," Mu shi said.

"We understand that." The crowd nodded.

"Good. It's settled then..."

Seeing that the crowd had agreed to it without any hesitation, Mu shi was just about to seal the deal when Wu Rufeng, who had been watching the situation by the side, abruptly spoke up. "Due to the dangers regarding the expedition to the ancient domain, the minimum cultivation to join the team is Saint realm. Since Principal Zhang is only at Nascent Saint, it will be best for you to sit out on this one. Otherwise, you will just end up dragging everyone down!"

"Me?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

His cultivation might only be at Nascent Saint, but if he were to exert his full strength, he could easily subdue a Saint realm 1-dan pinnacle cultivator. Furthermore... he possessed many life saving means.

To go a step further, even if everyone in this room were to attack him at this instant, he was confident that the side who would emerge victorious in the fight would be him.

Despite knowing nothing at all, this fellow had said that he would drag everyone else down. Wasn't this 7-star high-tier master teacher being too presumptuous?

Noticing the displeased expression on his Senior Uncle's face, Mu shi sent a telepathic message over. "Senior Uncle, Wu shi... is a little supercilious, so do bear with him a little."

"Supercilious?"

"Indeed. Even though You Xu's betrayal has nothing to do with Senior Uncle, you were reflected as the principal during the investigation, so... he felt that you have failed in your responsibilities because of the matter. Furthermore, your age and cultivation are indeed considerably low as compared to the other principals, so it can't be helped that he has a negative opinion of you," Mu shi explained.

Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly with a bitter smile.

It seemed like this fellow had been seated on a high position for far so long that he had become a little detached from common sense.

A subordinate's fault, in a way, could be considered the fault of the leader as well... but You Xu's betrayal had happened two years ago whereas it had only been four months since Zhang Xuan had enrolled into the Master Teacher Academy and met You Xu! It was one thing for him to not be rewarded for capturing You Xu, but to pin the blame on him on top of that...

Zhang Xuan couldn't help recalling a certain prevalent work culture in his previous world. Whenever a problem cropped up, the leader would capture a scapegoat to take the blame so as to display his authority and wisdom.

At this moment, it seemed like he was that very goat!

If it had been anyone else, there was no way they would have dared refute the

accusation from a 7-star high-tier master teacher. However, Zhang Xuan wasn't one to let others accuse him like that. He turned his gaze toward Wu shi and said, "You are Wu Rufeng, right?"

"Audacious! How dare a lower ranked master teacher address a higher ranked master teacher by his name! Where are your manners?" Not expecting Principal Zhang to speak to him in such a manner, Wu shi's face darkened.

"Where are my manners?" Chuckling softly, Zhang Xuan placed his hands behind his back and gazed at Wu shi impassively. "May I ask, what is Wu shi's relationship to Mu shi?"

With eyes narrowed menacingly, Wu shi harrumphed coldly. "Mu shi and I are both 7-star master teachers, so naturally, we are considered peers!"

As fellow 7-star master teachers from the Qingyuan Empire Master Teacher Pavilion, they were naturally peers.

"Peers? Good..." Following which, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze to Mu shi and asked, "Little Hong 1, how do you address me?"

"Senior Uncle!" Mu shi replied honestly.

"You heard that. Since you and Mu shi are fellow peers, and he addresses me as his senior uncle, that goes to say that you are a generation younger than me. As so, is there any reason I shouldn't call you Wu Rufeng? Or... could it be that you don't think that it is sufficiently intimate for me to address you by your full name?"

At which, Zhang Xuan pondered for a brief moment before adding, "Since that's the case, what do you think of Little Feng?"

Hearing the two words 'Little Feng', Wu shi nearly spurted blood and fainted on the spot.

"You..."

He hurriedly turned to Mu shi to see if the latter was speaking the truth.

After all, it was illogical for a 7-star master teacher to address a 6-star master teacher as his Senior Uncle!

Knowing what Wu shi intended to ask, Mu shi answered honestly, "Principal Zhang's teacher is my grandteacher, so going by seniority, he is indeed my senior uncle."

"This..." Wu shi's face turned livid.

Etiquette and seniority were very important to master teachers. Principal Zhang might not have been anything much, but if his teacher was very senior, he would share a high standing as well.

Just take Kong shi's students for example, even if they were completely ignorant and powerless, a 9-star master teacher would still have to humbly address them as 'senior'!

This was simply one of the rules.

Wu shi had intended to teach the other party a lesson, but who would have thought that he would become the other party's junior all of the sudden? He couldn't help but feel incredibly stifled within.

Chapter 973

Defeating Zhuo shi with a Single Finger

"So, am I qualified to call you Wu Rufeng?" Zhang Xuan asked calmly.

"I..." Wu shi wanted to refute those words, but unable to find a counterargument to that, his face turned redder and redder. Eventually, he waved his hand and said, "Relying solely on your seniority won't earn you the respect of anyone. What is more important is the contribution that you have made to the Master Teacher Pavilion and mankind. No matter how formidable your teacher may be, if you aren't able to contribute anything to mankind, there is no way you can gain the respect of anyone. You can't possibly expect to rely on your teacher forever!"

"Contribution?"

"Indeed. Only those who work diligently to give back to mankind are truly worthy of respect!" Wu shi said with his head raised up high.

A master teacher wouldn't gain the respect of others just because he was highly ranked or powerful. Take You Xu for example, he was a 6-star pinnacle master teacher, as well as an esteemed vice school head of the Master Teacher Academy. But as a traitor of humanity, there was no way anyone would respect him.

Looking at Wu shi's proud demeanor and boastful tone, Zhang Xuan said, "Judging from your tone, you seem to have contributed a lot to mankind."

"Indeed! I killed my first Otherworldly Demon when I was sixteen, and to date, I have slain a total of 47 Otherworldly Demons at Chrysalis realm and beyond! All in all, I have accumulated a total of 22 Contribution Points for mankind!" Wu shi harrumphed proudly with an air of superiority and grandiose.

"22 Contribution Points?"

"That's incredible!"

"As expected of Vice Pavilion Master Wu. With that many Contribution Points, he is

definitely ranked among the top in Qingyuan Conferred Kingdom!"

"A 7-star high-tier master teacher sure is fearsome."

...

Upon hearing those words, the eyes of Combat Master Liao, Combat Master Zhuo, Wo Tianqiong, and the others lit up in respect and admiration.

Even School Head Mo couldn't help but be awed by it, and his impression of Wu Shi changed as well.

Uncomprehending of the significance of the numbers, Zhang Xuan turned to School Head Zhao Bingxu and asked, "22 Contribution Points? What does that mean?"

Seeing that their principal wasn't too sure what was going on, Zhao Bingxu explained discreetly, "Killing an Otherworldly Demon counts as a contribution; saving mankind also counts as a contribution. Each contribution has its own extent of significance. In order to better measure contributions, the Master Teacher Pavilion has to quantify them."

This was a system that was implemented only within the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters, and the Master Teacher Academy didn't abide by it. Thus, there weren't any books regarding the topic in the academy's libraries.

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan nodded.

According to what he knew, it was possible to exchange one's contribution for artifacts at the Master Teacher Pavilion. If there was no method to quantify one's contribution, it would be hard to maintain the system efficiently.

For one, it would be hard to determine if one's contribution was sufficient to exchange for an artifact. After all, the Master Teacher Pavilion couldn't simply give out rare artifacts to individuals who had barely done anything at all.

Coming to that realization, Zhang Xuan continued his querying. "How are the Contribution Points derived?"

Zhao Bingxu pondered for a moment before replying. "Regarding the distribution of Contribution Points, the Master Teacher Pavilion has a set of guidelines and

regulations to determine how it should be tabulated. I don't really know much about the details either, but... your previous accomplishment of taming all of the saint beasts and spirit beasts of the Cloudmist Ridge, sparing mankind from an impending crisis... After we reported it to the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters, they tabulated it to be worth around 5 Contribution Points!"

"Only 5 Points?" Zhang Xuan was astounded.

The Nine Kings of the Cloudmist Ridge had a cultivation of Saint 1-dan pinnacle, and there were many other Nascent Saint, Half-Saint, and Chrysalis realm spirit beasts among them as well.

He had tamed so many of them, but to think that they were only worth 5 Contribution Points...

Considering that the other party had 22, that was indeed rather formidable.

"Indeed. Even though the beasts of the Cloudmist Ridge are violent, they stayed cooped up within the mountain most of the time, only raising beast stampedes once in a blue moon. Furthermore, the Master Teacher Academy is stationed there, which minimized the threat they posed. As a result, the contribution from your actions was perceived to be lower," Zhao Bingxu said a little awkwardly.

He was a little surprised when he heard that Principal Zhang had only received this many Contribution Points after taming so many saint beasts and spirit beasts, so he had asked about the matter. That was the exact answer he had received.

The extent of the contribution wasn't determined by how formidable one's feat was, but by how much one had actually contributed to mankind.

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan nodded.

The killings conducted by the beasts of the Cloudmist Ridge was done extremely discreetly, such that even Zhao Bingxu and the others didn't know much about it. They also thought that those beasts had only camped on the mountain, rarely conducting any acts of aggression against humans.

Due to the Bluehorn Dragon Beast and Vicious being involved in this matter, Zhang Xuan had instructed School Head Mo not to speak of this matter to another. Naturally, the headquarters were unaware of this matter, so the Contribution Points awarded to

him were less than initially expected.

"Wu shi, Senior Uncle is still young. Given his talent and capability, it is just a matter of time before he makes a great contribution to humanity. Besides, he was the one who captured You Xu and exposed his facade, ridding mankind of a black sheep..." Mu shi tried to ease the tension in the room.

He wasn't aware of the matter regarding the Cloudmist Ridge, but the capture of You Xu, a traitor of humanity, would surely count as Zhang Xuan's contribution as well.

"Capturing You Xu? Humph, does this contribution even add up to a single point?" Wu shi smirked coldly.

"This... It happens to add up to a single point," Mu shi replied awkwardly.

"Hehe!" Wu shi sneered coldly before turning to Zhang Xuan once more. "Principal Zhang, just as you can see, no matter how capable as your teacher is, you still need to depend on yourself to win the respect of others. You should just stay here! The expedition to the ancient domain will be extremely dangerous; we aren't going there to play. There won't be anyone to take care of you; I fear that you might meet with danger if you head there!"

Zhang Xuan scratched his head.

Considering that he was only at Nascent Saint pinnacle, it was indeed very dangerous for him to head to an ancient domain where even a 7-star master teacher could possibly lose his life. It wasn't completely unreasonable for the other party to not want to bring him along.

Just that... To judge a person's strength solely by their cultivation, wasn't the other party jumping to conclusions a little too fast?

With such thoughts in mind, Zhang Xuan looked at Wu shi and chuckled softly. "Since that is the case... may I know if Combat Master Zhuo is qualified to join the expedition?"

"As a Hundred Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall and a Saint 2-dan Spiritual Perception realm expert, Combat Master Zhuo is naturally qualified to join the expedition!" Wu shi replied.

"I see..." Zhang Xuan's lips curled up as he turned to Zhuo Qingfeng with a bright smile. "Combat Master Zhuo, are you free? It happens that I managed to achieve a breakthrough recently, and I would like to find someone to spar with."

"You want to spar with me?" Zhuo Qingfeng was taken aback. After a moment of hesitation, he nodded. "Since Principal Zhang is in the mood, I am more than willing to accompany you!"

Honestly speaking, after having two parties from the Combat Master Hall decimated by the students of the young man before him, he had been wanting to see the young man's strength for himself.

However, it was a pity that the other party was often not around, so he hadn't been able to find an opportunity to do so. Since this was a rare opportunity for him to test the other party's strength, his interest was immediately piqued.

In any case, no matter how formidable Principal Zhang might have been, he was only at Nascent Saint pinnacle. As a Saint 2-dan expert, he didn't think that he would lose to the other party!

"Alright, let's begin!" Zhang Xuan said with a smile, and he took a nimble step to the center of the room.

"You want to spar here?" Zhuo Qingfeng was taken aback. "If we fight here, won't the shockwaves of our battle cause this assembly room to collapse?"

As spacious as the assembly room seemed, if the might of his Saint realm 2-dan cultivation were to leak out, it could easily devastate the entire area. It would be embarrassing if he collapsed the Elder Hall by accident.

"Don't worry, there is no such risk. The battle will end quickly!" Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

"End quickly?" A frown emerged on Zhuo Qingfeng's face as his complexion turned awful. "Since Principal Zhang insists on it, I won't stand on ceremony!"

Zhuo Qingfeng flicked his wrist and took out a sword before harrumphing coldly. "Draw your weapon!"

"Weapon?" Zhang Xuan shook his head. "There is no need to go through that much

trouble. Let's begin!"

After his Golden Origin Core's metamorphosis into a Violet Origin Core, the fighting prowess he could display had been enhanced more than twofold. In his current state, even a Saint 2-dan opponent was nothing to him.

"Don't blame me if you get hurt then!" Seeing how the other party was even more arrogant than his student, refusing to even draw his weapon against him, Zhuo Qingfeng's face turned incredibly livid. With a swift flick of his wrist, he charged forward to make the first move.

This time, he didn't suppress his cultivation. Exerting the full might of a Saint 2-dan Spiritual Perception realm cultivator, his zhenqi burst forth from his body and ravaged the surroundings. In an instant, a sound reminiscent of the crazy rumbling of thunder sounded.

"How powerful..." School Head Mo, School Head Zhao, and the others paled in fright.

Even Wo Tianqiong and the others couldn't help but narrow their eyes in alarm.

While they did possess higher cultivation than Zhuo Qingfeng, in a true duel, they had no doubt that they would be the ones to be defeated in the end.

Principal Zhang was only at Nascent Saint pinnacle, two whole cultivation realms weaker than Zhuo Qingfeng, so how could he possibly even stand his ground against the latter?

With such thoughts in mind, everyone hurriedly turned their gazes to Zhang Xuan, only to see the latter standing with a composed smile on his face against Zhuo Qingfeng's powerful swordsmanship, clearly devoid of any intention to dodge at all.

"Humph!" Realizing that he was being looked down upon, rage flickered across Zhuo Qingfeng's eyes as he leaped forward to strike. A cold, sharp glint flashed across the area before a sword whizzed right for Zhang Xuan's chest, as if a venomous snake.

Since this was a spar, Zhuo Qingfeng didn't intend to land a fatal blow.

Nevertheless, if Zhang Xuan were to be caught in the attack, he would surely suffer severe injuries under the onslaught of the sharp sword qi and rampaging zhenqi,

"Hehe!" Watching as the other party's sword swiftly approached him, Zhang Xuan chuckled.

In the moment that the sword was just about to pierce his chest, Zhang Xuan raised two fingers and grabbed lightly.

Weng!

The astounding momentum of Zhuo Qingfeng's sword came to an abrupt halt just like that. As if a snake grabbed at the neck, no matter how Zhuo Qingfeng tugged and pulled, his sword just wouldn't budge.

"This..." Zhuo Qingfeng's eyes narrowed in astonishment.

Grabbing a sword empty-handed was no easy feat. To achieve this feat, one had to possess not only an outstanding eye of discernment and a precise grasp of timing in combat, but most importantly of all, formidable strength!

As a combat master, Zhuo Qingfeng's strength was far greater than other Spiritual Perception realm cultivators. For his strongest sword art to be stopped with a simple pinch of two fingers... How could this possibly happen?

In the midst of Zhuo Qingfeng's shock, the young man opposite to him abruptly released his grip on the sword and flicked the blade of it lightly.

Boom!

An immense might tore through the sword and struck Zhuo Qingfeng, forcing him to retreat eight steps.

Every single step he took left a deep footprint in the ground.

Yet, those eight steps were still insufficient for him to neutralize the relentless might from Zhang Xuan's flick, so he chose to leap up in hopes that it could further thin the might.

Peng!

However, Zhuo Qingfeng was still underestimating the might of the flick. The leap he took sent him crashing straight into a pillar in the assembly room, and with a reddened

face, he spurted a mouthful of blood.

It was only then that the might finally dissipated. Swiftly withdrawing his sword, Zhuo Qingfeng walked up to the young man before him and clasped his fist. "Principal Zhang, thank you for going easy on me!"

Had the other party not held back, he might have been smashed into a lump of meat paste earlier.

It was no wonder Zheng Yang and Wei Ruyan were so monstrously powerful... It turned out that their teacher was a real monster!

To think that a day would come which he, a Saint 2-dan combat master, would lose to a Nascent Saint.

"You are being too kind."

Zhang Xuan's purpose was only to display his strength. It would suffice to make in his point.

After trading a few pleasantries with Zhuo Qingfeng, he turned to Wu shi and asked, "So, is someone of my strength qualified to join the expedition?"

Chapter 974

Wu shi's Embarrassment

Witnessing that, Wu shi's eyebrows shot up. "This..."

For a Nascent Saint master teacher to defeat a Saint 2-dan combat master barehanded... this was way too fearsome!

On top of that, just a moment ago, he had mocked the other party's strength! Who could have thought that the other party would defeat Combat Master Zhuo the very next moment? This was a direct slap to his face!

"Based on the intelligence we have so far, there are many Otherworldly Demonic Tribe experts in the ancient domain. Even a 6-star pinnacle master teacher like You Xu was unable to stand his ground against them! What makes you so confident that you will be able to stand against them?" Wu shi placed his hands behind his back and gazed at Zhang Xuan coldly. With a challenging tone, he questioned, "Have you fought an Otherworldly Demon before? Do you know how fearsome they are? Have you even seen an Otherworldly Demon before?"

"I..." Zhang Xuan was just about to respond, but the 7-star master teacher before them waved his hands again.

"In my lifetime, I have personally fought and killed 52 of them. Not only are they powerful and capable of challenging opponents stronger than them, more importantly, they exude a heavy killing intent that renders it difficult for anyone to stand against them!

"Against such enemies, possessing some combat prowess isn't enough. More importantly, you must have tremendous mental fortitude and determination. If you don't have those, you should just remain here."

While Wu shi was indeed picking on Zhang Xuan, his concerns weren't entirely illogical.

Even if Zhang Xuan possessed strong fighting prowess and had the guidance of a

formidable teacher, he was ultimately still a twenty-year-old young man. There were many geniuses who had lost themselves under the overwhelming pressure emanated by the fearsome Otherworldly Demons, resulting in unexpected situations.

A mistake made by one wouldn't just affect the individual but the entire team. The expedition to the ancient domain was already dangerous as it was, and it would be unwise to bring in another unstable factor.

Zhang Xuan could tell that Wu Shi wasn't a bad person at heart. The other party had just been in a lofty position for too long, which made him obstinate about his views. Shaking his head, he began to explain, "Regarding the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe..."

Halfway through his explanation, however, an elder abruptly rushed into the room.

"Principal Zhang!" The elder rushed forward and clasped his fist.

Noticing the peculiar expression on the other party's face, Zhang Xuan frowned. "Did something happen?"

That elder hesitated for a moment before speaking. "Principal Zhang, School Head Lu... Lu Shi seeks an audience!"

Due to Lu Feng's conflict with Principal Zhang, he had almost had his license revoked. It was only known among a couple of people, but as an elder of the Master Teacher Academy, he had heard a thing or two about it. Without a doubt, there was bound to be some bad blood between the two of them. As such, he felt a little conflicted reporting Lu Feng's arrival to Principal Zhang.

"Lu Feng?" Unaware of the elder's thoughts, Zhang Xuan was taken aback for a moment he chuckled softly.

After leaving the seal, he had tried to look for them but to no avail. From the looks of it, they had managed to get out of the Subterranean Gallery safely.

"Invite him in!" Zhang Xuan waved his hand.

"Yes..." Seeing that Principal Zhang didn't get displeased over this matter, the elder heaved a sigh of relief before hurriedly leaving.

Not too long later, the elder returned with an old man walking behind him. Who else

could it be other than Lu Feng?

The current Lu Feng no longer commanded a sharp disposition about him. There was clarity in his eyes, and he felt more mature and reliable than before.

It seemed like the happenings in the Subterranean Gallery had evoked a significant change in his mental state.

"Principal Zhang, you are fine! That's good..." Seeing the young man sitting safe and sound in the middle of the hall, Lu Feng heaved a sigh of relief.

While he had guessed that the other party would be fine after seeing the many corpses of the Otherworldly Demons, it was still a huge relief to see it with his own eyes.

The other party had put himself in great danger to save them. If not for him, their entire team would have died.

"Of course, I am fine. What about you? Have you all recovered from your wounds yet?" Zhang Xuan replied with a kind smile.

"Thank you for your concern, we have recovered fully from our wounds. Principal Zhang, it was only through your courageous efforts that we were to survive that ordeal and avert a potential calamity. Please accept my gratitude..." After saying those words, Lu Feng prepared to kneel to the ground.

"Lu shi, there is no need to stand on ceremony." Zhang Xuan hurriedly rushed forward to help him up.

On the other hand, seeing the two men whom they had thought had great enmity between them speaking so amicably to one another, School Head Mo and School Head Zhao glanced at one another in bewilderment.

Unable to stand it any longer, School Head Jiang Qingqin asked, "What happened?"

"Oh, it is like that!" Upon hearing the question, Lu Feng began to explain.

"Five days ago, Principal Zhang went down to the Subterranean Gallery and saved all forty of us 6-star master teachers who were stationed there. At the same time, he personally slew more than two hundred Saint realm Otherworldly Demons, including two Saint 4-dan Kings. I have already reported this matter to the headquarters, and I

just received a response from them. I was intending to report this matter to the Master Teacher Academy so as to not allow Principal Zhang's contribution to go unnoticed, but I didn't expect Principal Zhang to have already returned..."

"Principal Zhang went down to the Subterranean Gallery?"

"Saved forty 6-star master teachers?"

"Slew more than two hundred Saint realm Otherworldly Demons, and this included their Kings as well?"

...

Hearing those words, the surroundings immediately fell silent.

Wu shi, who had just been authoritatively voicing his doubts about Zhang Xuan's capability, widened his eyes and nearly fainted on the spot.

He had just said that the other party hadn't even seen an Otherworldly Demon before, and this Lu Feng arrived a moment later to say that the other party had killed more than two hundred of them. Was this for real?

One must know that even he, a Saint 4-dan expert, hadn't killed that many yet!

And most importantly of all, there were two Kings among them!

It went without saying that each of the Otherworldly Demon Kings possessed fearsome might. Even a Saint 4-dan master teacher like him would be no match for an Otherworldly Demon King. Yet, based on what Lu Feng was saying, it seemed like Principal Zhang had not only survived an encounter with them, but he had even killed two of them.

Just the notion of it left his mind completely blank.

Wu shi turned to Lu Feng and asked grimly, "Is what you are saying true?"

"It is the utmost truth; I can guarantee it with my life!" Lu Feng nodded. "Furthermore, the headquarters have already investigated and confirmed the matter after we reported to them, and they have already converted Principal Zhang's contribution into Contribution Points. The reason I am here today is to hand them over to Principal

Zhang."

After saying those words, Lu Feng flicked his wrist, took out a jade token with a faint yellow hue, and presented it to Zhang Xuan.

"Principal Zhang, you faced great danger to slay so many Otherworldly Demons and save us. We can't allow your deeds to go unnoticed. The headquarters made an evaluation based on the situation then and awarded you with 1211 Contribution Points."

"O-one thousand points?" Wu shi's body trembled, and he nearly spurted blood.

He had slain his first Otherworldly Demon when he was sixteen, and it had been several hundred years since then. He had never slacked in his effort of hunting down Otherworldly Demons, but the Contribution Points he had accrued over so many years only added up to 22 points.

This should have been a record that any master teacher would feel proud of, and countless would gasp in wonderment at. So, he had used it to mock Principal Zhang, but who could have known that, in the blink of an eye, the other party would suddenly be awarded more than a thousand points?

Could there be anything more exaggerated than that?

Even if the other party had slain more than two hundred Saint realm Otherworldly Demons and two Kings, it shouldn't have added up to that much!

Wu shi wasn't the only one who harbored such doubts. The others in the room thought the same as well.

As if having seen through their thoughts, Lu Feng explained, "These Otherworldly Demons entered the Subterranean Gallery through paying a heavy price to breach the seal between both worlds. They shouldered an important mission, and had they succeeded, Hongyuan Empire could very well have faced extinction. Principal Zhang's act of slaying them has effectively foiled their ploy, preventing them from carrying out a devastating massacre. This is a huge merit, and even a thousand Contribution Points can hardly match up to what he has done."

"This..." Everyone pondered for a moment before nodding in agreement.

Indeed, slaying a few hundred Otherworldly Demons couldn't exactly be considered a huge merit, but if one had foiled their ploy by doing so and saved countless lives, that would be a different matter.

Paying no heed to the crowd's shock, Lu Feng continued. "There is also one more matter that the headquarters have yet to confirm for the time being. However, they are already checking on it, and once it is confirmed, it could very well earn Principal Zhang tens of thousands or even a hundred thousand Contribution Points."

"Tens of thousands or a hundred thousand Contribution Points? Just what kind of huge merit can earn one so many Contribution Points?" Mu shi asked in agitation.

Even slaying a Saint realm Otherworldly Demon might not even earn one a single point. Through this, it could easily be seen how difficult it was to earn Contribution Points.

To earn a thousand Contribution Points out of the blue was already inconceivable. Just what could it be that could allow Principal Zhang to earn tens of thousands or a hundred thousand Contribution Points after confirmation?

Mu shi wasn't the only one who was shocked by the matter. Wu shi, School Head Mo, and the others also had confused looks on their faces, unable to make heads or tails of the situation.

"It is like this. We entered the Subterranean Gallery earlier and found that the seal severing the space to the otherworldly battlefield had been repaired. If I am not mistaken, that must be Principal Zhang's doing, right?" Lu Feng raised his gaze and looked at Zhang Xuan.

"As long as the seal remained damaged, the Otherworldly Demon would have been able to continue their invasion. Thus, I spent a few days to fix the seal using a secret art that my teacher once imparted to me." Zhang Xuan nodded.

"As I thought." Lu Feng's eyes lit up.

Having stayed in the Subterranean Gallery for three months, he had already learned about the damage suffered by the seal. Knowing that this invasion wasn't an exception and there would be many more to come, he had prepared himself to spend his entire life fighting in the Subterranean Gallery to protect mankind. Yet, who could have known that when he took another look at it, it was already completely repaired.

Their group of master teachers had been together throughout the entire duration, and there was no way the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe would shoot themselves in the foot. Thus, the only one who could have done it was Principal Zhang.

Furthermore, the seal had a complex structure that even had the laws of space tied into it. None of them had the ability to repair the seal either. However, if it was the miracle workshop, Principal Zhang, who had done it, then it would all make sense.

That was why he was rather certain about the matter.

Repairing the seal meant eliminating the possibility of an assault by the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe through the Subterranean Gallery once and for all. This was an immensely large merit.

Even a hundred thousand Contribution Points seemed meager in comparison.

As for what the outcome would be, the headquarters would come to a decision after they were done surveying the situation.

"Doesn't the seal involve the laws of space as well? Principal Zhang was actually able to fix it?"

"If it is really true, Principal Zhang really has contributed greatly to mankind this time."

"How did he do it?"

Hearing the conversation of the duo, the crowd was stunned.

The haughty and authoritative Wu shi from a moment ago looked as if he had been struck by a bolt of lightning.

"Right. Principal Zhang, did you just return from the Subterranean Gallery? I have been keeping a close eye on the seal, and it was still damaged the previous time I was there," Lu Feng suddenly asked out of curiosity.

He had gone to the seal to search for Zhang Xuan at one point, and it had still been damaged then. However, when he checked on it just a moment ago, it had already been completely repaired.

"Un. I only left the Subterranean Gallery an hour ago," Zhang Xuan replied with a bitter smile. "Look, I haven't even had a chance to change out of my clothes yet."

"Shortly after I returned from the Subterranean Gallery after braving through danger to slay a few hundred Otherworldly Demons and save Hongyuan Empire, the Assembly Bell chimed, so I had to rush over without any time to clean up or rest. Yet, I was actually accused of showing a lack of respect. Don't you think that is very absurd?"

Hearing those words, Wu Shi's face turned completely red, and in that moment, he desperately wished that he could find a hole in the ground to hide in.

Chapter 975

Zhang Xuan Wants to Organize an Exchange Visit

As a 7-star high-tier master teacher, Wu shi was more than glad to see talented fresh blood in the Master Teacher Pavilion.

However, his rage at You Xu's betrayal had given him a bad impression of the new principal as well, which was also the reason he had snubbed Zhang Xuan right from the start. On top of that, Zhang Xuan was also a little too young to have become the principal of a Master Teacher Academy. Achieving success too early in life tended to result in complacency, and that could be a particularly dangerous trait for a master teacher. He felt that a little bit of suffering to quell the other party's pride and temper his state of mind could go a long way.

He had thought that he would be able to easily make the other party learn that the world was larger than he thought and that there was always a man greater than the other. Yet, he had become the one learning that there was a man greater than the other instead.

Just the thought of it left him feeling stifled within.

Wu shi shook his head with a bitter smile. It is no wonder he was able to become a principal at his age and win Mu shi's praise and respect, inducing the latter to willingly address him as Senior Uncle. He sure isn't an ordinary person!

He had always respected those who had made great contributions to humanity, and the young man before him had personally descended into the Subterranean Gallery despite his esteemed position as the principal and rescued forty 6-star master teachers, slain hundreds of Otherworldly Demons, and repaired the seal.

Any of those three were feats worthy of respect!

Knowing all this, Wu shi decided to put aside his airs and apologized earnestly. "Principal Zhang, I shouldn't have jumped to conclusions without trying to understand the situation. I ask you forgive me for my previous offense!"

Master teachers valued etiquette, and a mistake was a mistake. Even if he was a 7-star high-tier master teacher, it was only right for him to admit his mistake wherever he had erred.

"Wu shi is being too polite; we are fellow master teachers working for mankind. Considering how dangerous the expedition will be, it is only right for you to act prudently." Zhang Xuan nodded.

"I am glad you didn't take it to heart." Wu shi also nodded. Putting aside the matter, he continued the discussion regarding the expedition. "Alright, since we have decided that everyone will be joining in the expedition, we shall meet in one month at Firesource City."

"Firesource City?"

"Un. Based on You Xu's account and the scouting done by our Master Teacher Pavilion, the entrance to the ancient domain is located in the vicinity of Firesource City," Wu shi replied.

The map of Hongyuan Empire came into his mind, and Zhang Xuan asked to confirm, "If I recall correctly, Firesource City is located near the boundary of Hongyuan Empire, close to the Saint Ascension Platform, right?"

Due to the close proximity between Firesource City and the Saint Ascension Platform, only a distance of several hundred kilometers, there were many pilgrims who would drop by for a short stay. As such, it had quite a prosperous economy.

"Yes, it is a city close to the Saint Ascension Platform," Wu shi replied. "The Saint Ascension Platform is the ground where Kong shi ascended to Sainthood, and the ancient domain is located close to it. Perhaps, there might be a connection between the two, but obviously, it is still too early to make any assumptions! We don't have enough information."

"Un."

The crowd nodded.

Anything relating to Kong shi shouldn't be spoken of easily without any concrete proof.

"Speaking of the Saint Ascension Platform, I must speak about something that happened just a while ago."

Wu shi chuckled softly as he turned his gaze to the crowd. "Kong shi left behind his writings on the Saint Ascension Platform, and three months ago, someone actually uncovered the true meaning behind those words, causing a huge ruckus then! Honestly speaking, I would really love to meet the expert who received Kong shi's acknowledgement. If possible, I would like to acknowledge him as my teacher and learn from him."

As Wu shi spoke, the admiration in his eyes deepened. Halfway through his words, he suddenly noticed that Wu Ran's face had reddened to the point that it seemed like it would blow up at any moment. Displeased with the other party's reaction, he frowned. "Principal Wu, is there something wrong? If I remember correctly, you are the leader of the Saint Ascension Circle, aren't you? After so many years of research, you were unable to figure out the true meaning of Kong shi's writing. Yet, someone else actually succeeded in doing so... Don't you think that it is an incredible feat?"

"Cough cough!" Wu Ran's eyes flew around the place. Unable to take it anymore, he said, "Wu shi, the expert who deciphered Kong shi's writing... is right before you!"

"Right before me?" Taken aback, Wu shi's eyes widened in astonishment. "Who is it?"

"It is... the person you said put on airs, Principal Zhang," Wu Ran said with a complicated expression.

"Principal Zhang?" Wu shi staggered on the spot, and he nearly fainted from the heavy shock.

You must be joking with me?

A Nascent Saint actually managed to find mistakes in Kong shi's writing?

Zhang Xuan also felt a little awkward, not knowing what to make of the situation. "The person you are speaking of... does indeed seem to be me!"

What is this? The man who put me down as if I was nothing a moment ago is actually saying that he wants to acknowledge me as his teacher. Sigh, these must be the problems that a person too outstanding faces all the time. What a dilemma!

"For several dozen thousand years, everyone thought that there couldn't be a single mistake in Kong shi's writing, so they cultivated strictly according to it. You are the man who found the mistake in it and courageously questioned it publicly... T-this..." Wu shi's lips trembled in frenzy.

As a 7-star high-tier master teacher, he had thought that he would be able to easily teach the new principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy a lesson for his lapse of responsibility regarding You Xu's matter so as to send out a stern warning to him. Who could have known that he would be the one who was taught a lesson instead?

For so many years, there had not been a person who dared doubt Kong shi's words. Even thinking about it was blasphemous to them!

This notion had become far too ingrained in their minds to change.

This was precisely why, when they heard that someone actually voiced doubts regarding the Kong shi's writing in the Saint Ascension Platform, they had been extremely shocked. This was equivalent to challenging a prevalent mindset that had dominated the Master Teacher Continent for many, many years, as well as challenging Kong shi's authority.

He had thought a person possessing the courage to do so would at least be a Saint 3-dan or 4-dan expert, a person who had a deep understanding of Sainthood. Who would have thought that it would turn out to be a twenty-year-old man whom he had just lectured a moment ago!

It could be said that the shock the other party had given him today was far more than what he had suffered in his entire life.

At this point, he felt that he should start rethinking life.

Seeing how shocked the other party was, Zhang Xuan shook his head. "It's nothing much. Kong shi was ultimately still a mortal. There is no mortal who doesn't make mistakes."

There was no man in the world who was infallible, and Sages weren't any exception to the rule!

"Y-you..."

Upon hearing these words, everyone's face paled. Wu shi even hurriedly closed his palm to seal the surroundings with his zhenqi, fearing that those words would have been overheard by others.

"Principal Zhang, Kong shi is the World's Teacher! His affairs mustn't be spoken of so lightly..." Noticing that their principal was unaware of the convention, School Head Mo hurriedly sent a telepathic message over to advise him.

"Oh." Zhang Xuan scratched his head. He had only just recalled a moment ago that in this world, a lower ranked master teacher was forbidden from speaking about the affairs of a higher ranked master teacher easily.

It was also thanks to this very rule that no other master teacher dared to look into his other persona, Yang Xuan.

As the World's Teacher, the founder of the Master Teacher Pavilion, Kong shi was naturally an existence that one shouldn't speak lightly of. If it was found that Zhang Xuan had spoken of him disrespectfully, he would be criticized by many master teachers.

In fact, it was not entirely impossible for him to be killed on the spot for his rudeness.

Those of the Master Teacher Continent had been brought up to respect their teachers, and the word 'teacher' held an exceptional position in each of their hearts. On the other hand, Zhang Xuan still retained the modern thinking he had in his previous life, so it was only natural that many would find it hard to accept his different line of thoughts.

It seemed like he really had to pay more attention to such matters in the future. Otherwise, if others were to use such an incident against him, he could be really put into a spot.

"I apologize for my prior faux pas. Please do not take it to heart," Zhang Xuan apologized.

School Head Mo quickly reacted with a soft chuckle. "Principal Zhang, what are you referring to? I didn't hear anything at all."

"Indeed, we didn't hear anything either."

The others nodded in agreement.

Since it was a matter regarding Kong shi, it was best to play a fool and act as if they hadn't heard anything at all.

Firstly, it was to avoid the fire from getting on them as well. Secondly, they could avoid offending the talented Principal Zhang.

In order to alleviate the awkward atmosphere, Liao Song asked, "Principal Zhang, your other two students, Wang Ying and Liu Yang, intend to challenge the trial of our Combat Master Hall as well. When do you think it will be convenient for them? It will be best for them to do it as fast as possible so that we can return soon."

"Let's hold the trial tomorrow then." At this point, Zhang Xuan hesitated for a moment before speaking once more. "Also... there is a faction in our academy known as the Xuanxuan Faction. If it is not too much trouble, I hope to bring them to your Combat Master Hall in the future so as to broaden their horizon. They will be able to interact and learn from one another."

It was impossible to become an expert by cultivating in isolation. The Combat Master Hall was filled with experts, and if the Xuanxuan Faction could interact with them, they would be able to broaden their horizons and learn about many new things. That would be beneficial to their growth in the future.

Zhang Xuan had been contemplating this issue for the past few days, and since Liao Song was there, it was a good opportunity to broach this subject.

"Xuanxuan Faction, interaction..." Recalling what they had undergone two days ago, when they had just entered the academy, Liao Song's face paled and his heart jolted in terror.

Even just hearing the word 'Xuanxuan' could easily send shivers up his spine at this point.

If it had been a normal interaction, it could be beneficial for the members of the Combat Master Hall as well. After all, everyone had their own unique interpretation of combat, and perhaps the insights that the students had could serve as a source of inspiration for their members. However, it was the Xuanxuan Faction they were talking about here.

If that group of tens of thousands of monsters were to visit their Combat Master Hall, would their members lose all faith and confidence?

Looking at the deep frown on Liao Song's face, an expression that looked as if he had eaten two jin 1 of salted vegetables, Zhang Xuan asked worriedly, "What's wrong? Am I putting you on the spot?"

"It's not that..."

Gritting his teeth, Liao Song said, "It's like this. Our Combat Master Hall branch is located in Qingyuan Empire, which is more than a month's journey from here. The reason I was able to arrive quickly is because I was in proximity to Hongyuan City when I received Zhuo Qingfeng's message. The ancient domain will be opening in a month. Why don't we talk about it once more after we survive the expedition?"

Qingyuan Empire was a significant distance away from Hongyuan Empire. Even if one rode on a saint beast, it would still be a journey of many days.

"You're right. Since that's the case, why I don't I just show you and your members to them later on so that you can interact with one another? Those fellows really can use some of your men's pointers. Also, this will also be a good opportunity for them to see the true experts in this world so that they don't become complacent!" Zhang Xuan said with a smile.

The fellows of the Xuanxuan Faction had also listened to his lecture, but they hadn't really internalized his teachings through practical combat yet. If they could spar with the experts of the Combat Master Hall, they would be able to improve by leaps and bounds.

"Pointers? True experts?" Hearing those words, Liao Song's lips twitched, and he nearly blacked out on the spot.

We might be considered experts before others, but to the freaks of the Xuanxuan Faction... Expert your head!

We were completely crushed by the Xuanxuan Faction right after we entered the academy, so what pointers could we possibly offer them?

You must be joking!

"It is an interesting notion, but I think we will pass on it." Liao Song waved his hand and turned it down awkwardly.

"It's just a normal interaction. Or does Combat Master Liao think that the students of our academy are too weak and are unworthy of your guidance?" Zhang Xuan asked with a frown.

Naturally, he was unaware of the traumatic experience that Combat Master Liao had gone through. However, this was a rare opportunity for the Xuanxuan Faction to meet and interact with combat masters, so he wanted to vie for this opportunity for his students.

Besides, the combat masters specialized in fighting. Shouldn't they be eager to join in, especially since it was a rare chance for them to display their skills?

"That's not it..." Liao Song waved his hands.

"It's settled then! It's just a normal spar to learn from one another; nothing bad will come of it! However, I will have to ask your combat masters to go easy on my students so as to not traumatize them too much," Zhang Xuan said affirmatively with a bright smile on his lips.

"Alright then..." Looking at the sincere and earnest face, Liao Song could tell that the other party wasn't attempting to humiliate him. Left with no choice, he could only nod in agreement with despair reflected in the depths of his eyes.

Well, the interaction would help to raise the fighting prowess of their combat masters too.

Chapter 976

Arriving at the Xuanxuan Faction

After confirming the matter with the other party, Zhang Xuan turned to Zhao Bingxu and instructed, "School Head Zhao, make some preparations. We shall construct a flying ship for our academy."

Zhao Bingxu nodded.

The construction of a flying ship was a huge project, but there were tens of thousands of students in the Blacksmith School. With all of them working simultaneously, it wouldn't take too long to finish it. The only reason Hongyuan still didn't have one to date was due to their lack of saint beasts to drive it.

However, having tamed the nine kings of the Cloudmist Ridge, as well as many other Half-Saint and Nascent Saint beasts, they had sufficient beastpower to drive the flying ship.

Since Zhang Xuan intended to take the members of the Xuanxuan Faction to Qingyuan Empire to conduct an exchange with the Combat Master Hall, it was infeasible to fly them over on spirit beasts. Who knew how many trips it would take to fly them there and back? If they could obtain a flying ship, that would make things much easier.

After settling the matter, the crowd chatted for a moment longer.

"Firesource City is around a week's journey away from here. The ancient domain hasn't opened yet, and there is no point in us arriving there too early either. Since that's the case, why don't we make our own preparations within this period of time and meet up at Firesource City when the time comes?" Wu shi proposed.

"That's a good idea!"

Voices of approval sounded among the crowd.

Not only was it pointless for them to arrive at Firesource City earlier, they might also catch the attention of the Otherworldly Demons and prompt them to prepare in

advance to deal with them, thus resulting in unneeded trouble.

"Alright then, we will take our leave first."

After saying so, Wu shi and Mu shi left the assembly room.

As the other academies were too far away, Wo Tianqiong and the others decided to remain in Hongyuan for the time being.

After arranging for School Head Mo to take good care of them, Zhang Xuan beckoned for Liao Song, Zhuo Qingfeng, and the other combat masters to gather before bringing them to the Xuanxuan Faction headquarters.

Before even arriving at their destination, they could already see plenty of people cultivating and practicing their battle techniques by the side.

With just a look, rage bubbled within Zhang Xuan, and his face darkened in anger. Unable to take it any longer, he roared furiously, "Stop whatever you are doing and come over! What in the world are you all doing?"

As the leader of the Xuanxuan Faction, he had great expectations for it. This was the reason he had lectured them tirelessly and even brought the combat masters over so that they could train with them.

He had thought that his hard work would bear him some fruits, but when he came over, these fellows... Just what in the world were they practicing?

Their movements were slack and lacking force, and their timing and combat sense were completely lacking. It was as if someone had starved them for days! Were they trying to swat flies?

"What in the world are they doing?"

Hearing the bellow, Liao Song, Zhuo Qingfeng, and the others glanced at one another, their eyebrows leaping up in astonishment.

In their eyes, the battle techniques that this group of students had been practicing were already plenty fearsome.

Why was the other party speaking as if they were making a huge mistake?

Weren't his expectations a little too high?

At this point, Ruohuan gongzi, Song Chao, and the others rushed out to greet Zhang Xuan. "Principal Zhang."

"What happened to what I taught you all before leaving?" Zhang Xuan roared furiously.

What the heck is this?

I put in so much effort into lecturing all of you, but what is it that you all are doing? How disgraceful!

"We are... already practicing very seriously!" The faces of Ruohuan gongzi and the others reddened.

"You call this practicing very seriously?"

With a deeply disappointed look, Zhang Xuan pointed to the few students not too far away and said, "The Autumn Wind Heralding Rain you were practicing previously might look impressive, but it is, in truth, an utter joke! What do you need so many feints for? In the first strike, as long you were to just lower your palm by three inches, you would have already been able to fell your opponent!"

After which, Zhang Xuan pointed to another student and said, "The Emerald Leaf Swordsmanship that you were practicing a moment ago is clearly an offensive move, but you actually practiced it as a defensive move! It would still have been fine if you actually managed to protect yourself well through that move, but as long as your opponent lowers their posture and attacks your lower body, what do you think will happen?

"As for your Chaotic Demon Hammering Art, it might look powerful and grand on the surface, but in truth, you aren't channeling your zhenqi into your strength well. If one were to find the point where your zhenqi intersects, even without making a move, just a sharp gaze in itself can potentially cause your zhenqi to fall into disarray, thus causing you severe injuries from the backlash...

"As for that..."

Zhang Xuan pointed to another eight more students, and every word he spoke left the pointed student lowering his head in shame.

They realized that all of the mistakes pointed out earlier had been covered in Principal Zhang's lecture back then, but they had somehow accidentally neglected it while practicing their battle techniques.

Thus, upon hearing what Principal Zhang said, they could only lower their heads silently in shame.

It was no wonder Zhang Xuan would get so enraged upon seeing them.

He had imparted his knowledge unreservedly, and he had thought that after a few days of hard work, everyone would at least have been able to internalize 60% to 70% of what he had covered back then. However, from the looks of it, they didn't even manage to internalize 20%!

For master teachers, wasn't their intelligence a little too poor?

Of course, one thing that Zhang Xuan had failed to realize was that his breakthroughs and modification of the Saint Ascension Decipher in the Subterranean Gallery had enhanced his eye of discernment, deepening his understanding of combat.

As a result, he was noticing more mistakes in the students' techniques than ever, and naturally, he thought that they hadn't made any improvements at all.

"T-this..." Liao Song and Zhuo Qingfeng's breathing hastened.

Those movements were overwhelmingly powerful and completely flawless in their eyes, and yet, the other party had been able to point out fatal flaws within them so easily. Wasn't his eye of discernment way too powerful?

It was no wonder he was able to defeat a Saint 2-dan combat master easily despite possessing only the cultivation of a Nascent Saint.

Just his eye of discernment in itself was already far beyond what they could compare with.

At this point, one of his subordinates, Zhou Ye, sent a telepathic message to him. "Liao shi, since there are so many flaws in their battle techniques and maneuvers, is it possible for us to exploit them to cleanse ourselves of our previous shame?"

For a Hundred Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall to be defeated by an

ordinary student of a Master Teacher Academy so easily, it was natural that he would be frustrated and vexed. Over the days, this feeling only seemed to have deepened.

Upon hearing that there were actually so many flaws in the moves of the Xuanxuan Faction members, his eyes immediately lit up in excitement.

"It is, but... I fear that it won't be as easy as you think to find their flaws." Liao Song shook his head.

As easy as Principal Zhang made it seem, even a person with his eye of discernment couldn't see through the flaws in the maneuvers of those Xuanxuan Faction members, so he didn't believe that his subordinate would be able to do so either.

How could one exploit a flaw they didn't even know of?

"Then... what if we find the weakest of them to challenge? There are thirty thousand of them, so it is impossible for all of them to be powerful!" Zhou Ye exclaimed.

"This..." Liao Song hesitated.

The other party was right. Every person had varying levels of aptitude for combat. Even if they had all listened to the same lecture from Principal Zhang, what they were able to comprehend and learn would inevitably be different from one another.

Just as there were incredibly powerful cultivators among the thirty thousand members of the Xuanxuan Faction, there were bound to be weak ones as well.

Take the few students whom Principal Zhang had berated earlier, this clearly showed that there were still many of them who were lacking in one way or another.

"Enough. What we should be thinking of is not to exploit their weaknesses to defeat them, but to reflect on and improve ourselves through them."

Just after Liao Song had lectured the others, Zhang Xuan began the introduction. "I believe I need not introduce Combat Master Liao, Combat Master Zhuo, and the others. I have invited them here today to offer you some pointers. Make sure to learn diligently later on and don't slack off."

"Yes!" The crowd nodded.

"Combat Master Liao, these are the students I was talking about. I have only lectured them for an afternoon, so their fighting prowess isn't too impressive yet. Just do whatever you can, and it will be best if you can show them how powerful combat masters are so that they could have a goal to pursue!"

After introducing both sides to one another, Zhang Xuan smiled.

"Ah..."

Liao Song was just about to speak when Ruohuan gongzi abruptly walked over and greeted, "Liao shi, we meet once again."

He was feeling a little embarrassed for pummeling the other party without knowing their identity.

"Yes, indeed. We meet again." Liao Song nodded in response.

"Alright, I will leave you all to it. I still have some matters to attend to, so I will be taking my leave first!" Zhang Xuan waved his hands.

Since there was still a month's time before the ancient domain opened, he was intending to use this period of time to pay a visit to Jingyuan City to find the Poison Hall and resolve Wei Ruyan's condition.

But first, he would have to make sure that everything was in order so that he could leave in peace.

Thus, he had brought these combat masters over in the hope of tempering the members of the Xuanxuan Faction.

If he could give them a glimpse of the strength of the combat masters, they could realize the gap between them and not embarrass them that badly when they went for the exchange later on.

On the other hand, hearing that Zhang Xuan was going to leave, Liao Song heaved a sigh of relief and clasped his fist. "Farewell!"

It would be best if the other party wasn't around. Otherwise, it would be too embarrassing if their combat masters were to be defeated by the other party's students after all that was said!

"Un." Zhang Xuan turned around and flew toward his residence. In the blink of an eye, he had already disappeared from sight.

Turning to the members of the Xuanxuan Faction, Liao Song clasped his fist and smiled. "Pleased to meet you all. While Principal Zhang has asked us to offer pointers to you, what he truly means is for the both of us to learn from one another. We can spar with one another so as to deepen our understanding of battle techniques."

Ruohuan gongzi nodded in agreement.

It wouldn't do to just learn the theories of combat. Only by the accumulation of experience through practical combat would one be able to improve.

Zhou Ye stepped forward. "Leader, I would like to challenge an expert of the Xuanxuan Faction!"

"Brother Zhou!" Ruohuan gongzi recognized the other party, and he greeted him with a smile. "I will help you find an opponent."

While he had managed to defeat Zhou Ye back then, the other party's fighting prowess was still considerable. The members of the Xuanxuan Faction looked formidable on the surface, but just as what Zhou Ye thought, there was a significant gap in the fighting prowess among them. Not every single one of them was a match for the combat masters.

"There is no need to go through that much trouble." Zhou Ye interrupted Ruohuan gongzi and asked with a smile, "Is it possible for me to select my own opponent?"

If he wished to cleanse himself of his shame, he would have to select a weak opponent. Otherwise, if Ruohuan gongzi were to pick an opponent for him, he would only be defeated once more.

"You wish to select an opponent yourself?" Ruohuan gongzi frowned. He could see through the other party's intention clearly, but after a moment of hesitation, he still nodded in agreement. "Feel free!"

The purpose of this sparring session was to enhance their fighting prowess, not to vie for honor. Losing here was not a big deal.

"Thank you." Hearing the other party agree to his request, Zhou Ye heaved a sigh of

relief.

He began scanning the crowd to find an opponent.

The Xuanxuan Faction had more members than what one could see with a single glimpse. It wasn't very easy to determine the strength of an individual among the crowd from outside.

A moment later, Zhou Ye's eyes lit up as he pointed toward a certain figure. "I choose that person!"

"You choose her?" Turning to look at the person whom Zhou Ye had pointed at, Ruohuan gongzi's lips twitched. "Are you certain?"

"I am!" Zhou Ye nodded.

He had met a few of the male students of the Xuanxuan Faction, and he hadn't been a match for them. Thus, he decided to challenge a lady this time around.

The lady he had chosen looked like she was in her early twenties, and she was extremely beautiful as well. At first sight, his heart was already moved.

If he could defeat the other party and display tremendous strength in the process, perhaps he might be able to win the other party's favor and capture her heart.

More importantly, the other party's cultivation was equal to his, Chrysalis realm. This way, he wouldn't have to suppress his cultivation, allowing him to exert the full extent of his might.

"If you are really certain, alright then..." Seeing Zhou Ye insisting on it, Ruohuan gongzi could only shake his head.

He walked toward the young lady and explained the situation. The latter frowned for a moment before giving a nod of agreement and then walking to the nearby dueling ring.

Leaping onto the dueling ring as well, Zhou Ye bowed gentlemanly and asked with a smile, "I am Zhou Ye. May I know how to address you?"

"I am..." The young lady looked at Zhou Ye and spoke with a nonchalant voice.

"Yu Fei-er!"

Chapter 977

The Mysterious Disappearance of the Combat Masters

The young lady whom Zhou Ye had chosen was none other than Yu Fei-er.

She had been with Zhang Xuan for two months while he was undergoing the Empire Building test, cultivating diligently under the other party's guidance. To date, her cultivation had already reached Chrysalis realm pinnacle, and her fighting prowess was even more fearsome. The reason she had gone to the Xuanxuan Faction was to have a chat with Zhang Xuan, but who knew that the latter would just turn around and leave? She was already frustrated by this matter, so when she heard that someone was foolish enough to actually challenge her to a duel, she agreed to it.

Having been brought up in a doting environment, Yu Fei-er tended to allow her emotions to dictate her actions. No matter who he was, as long as the other party had provoked her, she would pummel him unhesitatingly!

She wasn't an official member of the Xuanxuan Faction, but given her close relationship with Zhang Xuan, there was no one in the Xuanxuan Faction who considered her an outsider.

"Yu Fei-er? What a beautiful name!" Zhou Ye remarked with a fine smile.

"Let's begin!" Yu Fei-er couldn't be bothered to waste her breath with the other party, so she raised her hand coldly and beckoned for the other party to begin.

"Sure, let's begin!" Zhou Ye nodded excitedly. With a confident glint in his eyes, he said, "Since we are only sparring, I think there is no need to use weapons. It will be bad if we accidentally injure one another. Don't worry, I will try my best not to injure you..."

To be able to reach Chrysalis realm at such a young age, the other party was indubitably a talented individual. However, he, Zhou Ye, was not an easy opponent either!

So what if she was from the Xuanxuan Faction as well?

He might not be a match for Zheng Yang, Wei Ruyan, and the others, but he didn't believe that he would lose twice to opponents who had only sat through an afternoon lecture from Principal Zhang.

Hu!

With such thoughts in mind, Zhou Ye stepped forcefully against the ground and began charging toward the young lady.

Driving his zhenqi furiously to gather his full strength, a loud rumbling reminiscent of thunder boomed from his palm.

Upon seeing that sight, Liao Song nodded in approval. "Sevenstar Thunder Palm! Zhou Ye sure isn't going easy on the other party at all."

Perhaps due to the loss he had suffered the previous time around, he didn't go easy on his opponent just because she was a lady. Instead, he was proceeding more careful than ever. In the very first move, he had already executed his strongest attack.

The Sevenstar Thunder Palm made use of seven acupoints on one's palm in order to construct the Sevenstar Formation to harness one's zhenqi with the might of thunder. It was a Spirit pinnacle battle technique, and even Half-Saint cultivators would have to flee before this technique, needless to say, a delicate young lady like the other party.

On the other hand, the unbelievably beautiful young lady remained completely motionless on the spot, seemingly scared out of her wits by the incredible momentum of Zhou Ye's attack.

Frowning, Zhou Ye exclaimed in alarm, "Be careful..."

But before he could finish his words, the young lady before him suddenly flicked the delicate sleeves of her robe.

"What is she doing..."

Just as Zhou Ye was perplexed as to why the other party would abruptly flick her sleeves in the middle of the battle, his entire body suddenly jolted. An unbelievable force reminiscent of a devastating hurricane was rushing right toward him.

Hu la!

Before he could fully exert the might of the Sevenstar Thunder Palm, it was extinguished like a candle flame amid a storm. Following which, he felt a dull pain in his chest, and with a cry of agony, he was knocked out of the dueling ring.

Putong!

He collapsed on the ground.

"This..." Liao Song and Zhuo Qingfeng glanced at one another, and their bodies stiffened in astonishment.

How could that young lady possess such fearsome strength?

They had once crossed hands with the members of the Xuanxuan Faction on a previous occasion, and the opponents they had faced did possess combat sense far greater than theirs. But in terms of strength, their combat masters had still held the upper hand.

Yet, the sheer might from a casual flick of the young lady's sleeves had actually sent Zhou Ye flying... Just how powerful was she?

This was way too exaggerated!

After knocking Zhou Ye out, Yu Fei-er turned to Liao Song and the others and said, "Suppress your cultivation down to my level and come at me all at once!"

She was already unhappy at having been deprived the opportunity of speaking to Zhang Xuan, and these fellows had actually provoked her at such a sensitive moment. They were simply courting death!

Who of Hongyuan Empire didn't know that she, Yu Fei-er, had an explosive temper? She was never one to hold herself back. A bunch of puny combat masters actually dared to provoke her while she was in a bad mood. If she didn't knock the teeth out of their mouths, her surname wouldn't be Yu!

"What an arrogant woman. Allow me to teach her a lesson!" Hearing Yu Fei-er's words, a Chrysalis realm combat master couldn't stand it any longer and leaped onto the dueling ring.

However, before he could even land on the ground, a figure abruptly materialized before his eyes, and in the next instant, a palm struck his chest.

Peng!

Before he could even get onto the dueling ring, he had already been pounded into the ground, coughing huge spurts of blood.

She had been listening to Zhang Xuan's lessons every single day in the two months she had accompanied him. The result of that was a tremendous surge in her cultivation, as well as a frightening growth in her fighting prowess.

"Damn you!" Seeing how their companion had been knocked down before he could even get on the dueling ring, the other combat masters were enraged.

Roaring furiously, they suppressed their cultivation to Chrysalis realm pinnacle and charged forward.

"Why don't you try speaking with your fists instead of your mouth?" Paying no heed to the furious roaring of the combat masters, Yu Fei-er leaped forward and dashed into the midst of the combat masters.

Pili pala!

Ten minutes later, other than Liao Song and Zhuo Qingfeng, the remaining combat masters were lying on the ground with looks of despair in their eyes.

Many of them possessed strength beyond Chrysalis realm, but with their cultivation suppressed to Chrysalis realm pinnacle, they found themselves being severely outmatched by the young lady. In fact... they couldn't even withstand a single blow from the other party!

The young lady was indeed beautiful, but she felt like a rampaging dinosaur shaped in the form of a human. The overwhelming strength that she wielded was far beyond their means!

Staring at his fallen subordinates, Liao Song clenched his fists tightly. "You aren't an ordinary member of the Xuanxuan Faction, are you?"

He had met the ordinary members of the Xuanxuan Faction, and while they weren't

weak either, they were nowhere as fearsome as the rampaging young lady before his eyes. Even compared to Zheng Yang and the others, she didn't pale far in comparison.

There was no way a single lecture or two from Principal Zhang could make her that powerful!

With such thoughts in mind, Liao Song asked, "If I am not mistaken, you... are Principal Zhang's student, aren't you? Otherwise, there is no way you can be that powerful..."

"You are the one who is Principal Zhang's student, your entire family is Principal Zhang's students!" Triggered, Yu Fei-er bellowed furiously as she charged straight toward Liao Song.

At this moment, the words that she dreaded to hear the most were that she was Zhang Xuan's student. If such a relationship between the both of them were to be affirmed, she would have to sever all of those thoughts of hers.

Yet, that fellow just had to pick right at her wounds. Unforgivable!

"You..." Not expecting the other party to fly into such a rage at a casual question from him, Liao Song nearly keeled over. He hurriedly dodged the attack and began suppressing his cultivation down to the other party's level. Shortly after he did so, he saw the young lady's palm raining down on him frenziedly.

"Liao shi..." Upon seeing this sight, Zhuo Qingfeng couldn't help but turn his gaze away.

No doubt about it, his old friend was in for a round of suffering.

And as expected, five minutes later...

Liao Song's entire body was swollen red, and his face was ghastly paled.

Even after suppressing his cultivation to Chrysalis realm, his fighting prowess was still on par with that young lady's. But... it was as if that young lady had completely lost her rationality! Without any care or concern, she threw out blow after blow in quick succession. Even with his strength, it didn't take long for him to succumb.

It was fortunate that he had managed to protect his face right to the very end. Otherwise, he would have no face to face the others for many days to come.

"Humph!" After venting her frustration, Yu Fei-er tilted her face upwards and harrumphed before turning around to leave.

Right after she left, Hu Yaoyao walked into the headquarters with an expectant look. "Is Principal Zhang around?"

"Principal Zhang isn't around, but the members of the Combat Master Hall are. Does Senior Hu want to try fighting them?" Ruohuan gongzi replied respectfully.

"There are combat masters here? Sure..."

A ravishing smile blossomed on Hu Yaoyao's lips.

...

With the combat masters tempering the fighting capabilities of the members of the Xuanxuan Faction, Zhang Xuan could finally put his mind to ease. He returned to the manor to take a look at Wei Ruyan. After confirming that he had managed to suppress the poison aura within her body for the time being, he heaved a sigh of relief.

After which, he had Sun Qiang gather Wang Ying and the others.

"Teacher..."

Wang Ying and the others greeted upon seeing Zhang Xuan.

"I am going to take Wei Ruyan to Jingyuan City to uncover the whereabouts of the Poison Hall. Here are several manuals containing the cultivation techniques and comprehension of battle techniques I have compiled. Read through them quickly and voice whatever doubts you have regarding them now!"

Flicking his wrist, Zhang Xuan took out a few books and passed them over.

On the way back from the academy, he had quickly penned down his newfound comprehension of the Saint Ascension Decipher and several new insights regarding battle techniques.

He had no idea how long he would be gone for, so he decided to leave these items for them so that his departure wouldn't impede their cultivation.

"Yes!" Wang Ying and the others nodded before hurriedly taking the books.

The knowledge contained in the books was very profound, but having learned the Saint Ascension Decipher, it didn't take too long for them to comprehend it. Within less than six hours, they had already gained a deep understanding of the material.

Zhang Xuan also explained the parts that they were uncertain about in detail.

By the time they were done, it was already late at night.

"Alright. Wang Ying and Liu Yang, you will be challenging the Dragon Gate Formation tomorrow, so make sure to internalize what I have taught you today," Zhang Xuan instructed.

One of the reasons he was in such a rush to teach them was to prepare Wang Ying and Liu Yang for the Dragon Gate Formation.

He had never seen it before, but after hearing Zheng Yang's account on clearing the trial, he could tell that it wouldn't be easy.

Wang Ying and Liu Yang had become his students rather early on, and they were diligent in their studies as well, but with their current strength, it would be difficult for them to clear such a difficult trial within two hours without resorting to special means like Zheng Yang.

However, if they could further their cultivation of the Saint Ascension Decipher and deepen their comprehension of combat, they could stand a pretty good chance.

"Yes!" Wang Ying and Liu Yang nodded before turning their attention back to internalizing the knowledge they had just learnt.

Some time later, they finally managed to fully digest the new knowledge that their teacher had imparted to them, and their fighting prowess rose significantly.

Getting to their feet, Wang Ying and Liu Yang turned to their teacher and declared confidently, "Teacher, we will surely clear the Dragon Gate Formation!"

They hadn't been too confident about clearing the trial previously, but after digesting everything their teacher had just taught, they felt that they were ready to face it.

Furthermore, they had also shared the battle techniques they had just learned with one another, thus granting them more cards to play against the combat masters. In their current state, they were confident of victory.

"Good!" Zhang Xuan nodded in approval. Taking a look out of the window, he saw that the sun had already risen; it was daybreak.

"Alright, let's head to the academy now."

Together with his two students, Zhang Xuan headed to the Master Teacher Academy, but barely after stepping through the entrance, School Head Mo suddenly rushed up to him with an anxious look on his face.

"Principal Zhang! I just went to the combat masters' accommodation and... they are all gone! They have left without bidding farewell, leaving just a letter behind."

"They have left?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

Weren't they going to assess Wang Ying and Liu Yang? Why would they suddenly leave overnight without bidding farewell?

Perplexed, Zhang Xuan took the letter from School Head Mo's hands and quickly scanned it.

Chapter 978

Jingyuan City

There were only two lines of words on it, and the message was simple.

It said that they still had something to do at the Combat Master Hall, so they had to take their leave in advance. They would meet them later on when the ancient domain opened. As for the reason for their departure, they hadn't said a word about that.

After reading the message, Zhang Xuan was perplexed.

Weren't they still doing fine yesterday, agreeing to a sparring session with the Xuanxuan Faction and saying that they would work together to improve collectively? Why would they suddenly leave in the blink of an eye?

Why were the elders and master teachers whom he came into contact with always so unreliable?

Despite having lived in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy for some time, they actually left without bidding farewell at all, as if there was some kind of monster chasing them behind their backs. This was really far too disrespectful of them.

How did such a lawful and courteous person like him end up being surrounded by such a bunch of undependable acquaintances? Ah, how distressing...

"Did anything happen in the Combat Master Hall?" Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan turned to School Head Mo and asked.

"That doesn't seem likely. I asked them about it through our shared mode of communication, and they said that they just had some private matters to attend to. As for what the private matter was, they weren't willing to speak of it no matter how I asked them about it... Oh, right! Principal Zhang, when I returned yesterday night, I noticed that all of them were injured. Could it be related to that?" School Head Mo pondered for a moment before replying.

Earlier, while returning to his residence after finally having finished the matters at

hand, he had happened to see Combat Master Liao and the others returning to their accommodations with bruised faces and swollen cheeks. In order to avoid potential awkwardness, he had chosen not to ask about it. But thinking about it now, there was a very high chance that the two matters were related.

"Injured?" Zhang Xuan scratched his head in bewilderment.

Hadn't they gone to offer pointers to the members of the Xuanxuan Faction? How did they end up getting injured instead?

"Forget it, there's no point thinking too much about the matter. We will know the truth when we ask them a month later."

Since the combat masters had already left, there was no point thinking about it. Besides, he didn't have the time and effort to deal with it either.

After asking a few more questions and discussing the academy's administrative issues with School Head Mo, he returned back to the manor and reminded Wang Ying and the others to work hard on their cultivation. When all this was finally done, he carefully placed Wei Ruyan into the Myriad Anthive Nest, got onto the back of the Byzantium Helios Beast, and began heading for Jingyuan City.

The journey in search of the Poison Hall was going to be incomparably dangerous, so he chose not to bring his other direct disciples along, and he didn't intend to tell anyone else about his whereabouts either. In any case, it would be much more convenient for him to move alone than in a group too.

Jingyuan City was located at the extreme northeast of Hongyuan Empire, located in proximity to Hongyuan Empire's largest inland sea. As compared to Hongyuan City and Firesource City, it was relatively poorer and shabbier due to its remote location and cold climate all year round.

As merchants rarely visited Jingyuan City, there weren't too many people who knew of the situation there. The information that the Master Teacher Academy had on it was also rather lacking.

All that was known about it was that it was a small borderside city with frigid weather all year round. Considering the Poison Hall's nature of building its branches in remote locations, there was indeed a good chance that the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall was located here.

Of course, it was still too early to say for sure.

While the old principal had put a lot of work into acquiring that intelligence, there was no guarantee that it would be definitely true.

This was why Zhang Xuan had chosen to make haste. A month might have seemed like a long time, but given the secrecy shrouding the Poison Hall, it might not necessarily be sufficient.

...

"My fame has grown considerably after becoming the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy. If I were to suddenly appear in Jingyuan City in my own identity, I could risk alarming the Poison Hall..."

Seated on the back of the Byzantium Helios Beast as he advanced towards the small city marked on the map, Zhang Xuan lowered his head contemplatively.

He was no longer the nobody he was back then. He was currently the esteemed principal of one of the Four Great Master Teacher Academies of Qingyuan Conferred Empire, and his standing was on par with a 7-star master teacher.

The Poison Hall had always been in a tense relationship with the Master Teacher Pavilion. If he were to recklessly barge into Jingyuan City and investigate the whereabouts of the Poison Hall, he could very well face grave danger when his identity was exposed.

Thus, there was a need for him to don a disguise.

After pondering for a moment, Zhang Xuan began to warp his muscles and bones. His facial features began to change from those of a twenty-year-old young man to a forty-year-old middle-aged man's, and his physique also grew much bigger than before.

At the same time, driving his Heaven's Path zhenqi, the aura shrouding him also began to change. It became a little violent and ferocious, unlike the restrained and low profile disposition he usually commanded.

In his current state, if he didn't explicitly state that he was Zhang Xuan, not even Wang Ying or his other direct disciples would be able to recognize him.

The Heaven's Path zhenqi allowed him to conceal his aura, and the Heaven's Path Golden Body allowed him to alter his appearance freely. Considering that he was able to pass off as even an Otherworldly Demon with those two means, how difficult could it be for him to disguise as another human?

The Byzantium Helios Beast flew ahead at full speed, and ten days later, a city covered in snow appeared over the horizon.

Looking at it from afar, it was significantly smaller than Hongyuan City. Nonetheless, as compared to Huanyu City and the Myriad Kingdom City, it was still of a sizeable scale.

Many dull gray buildings were erected amidst a field of clear white snow, and they stretched all the way into the faraway distance. From above, the city resembled a tranquil ink painting.

"It is already nearing the middle of summer, but this land is still covered in snow..." Zhang Xuan couldn't help but be awed by the work of nature.

It was now the season when Hongyuan Empire would normally be covered by a lush layer of greenery. Yet, the city before him was freezing cold, leaving him feeling as if he had stepped into a different world.

"You should get into the Anthive Nest first."

Landing in a remote forest, Zhang Xuan had the Byzantium Helios Beast enter the Myriad Anthive Nest before making his way through the field of snow towards the city.

The Byzantium Helios Beast rarely appeared in public view, but it was still best for him to remain hidden just to be safe.

After paying the entrance fee of ten low-tier spirit stones, Zhang Xuan entered the city.

Walking through the streets, Zhang Xuan thought, It won't do for me to search blindly through the city. I must find a guide to bring me around!

The clues he had received thus far had pointed to Jingyuan City to be the most likely location where the Poison Hall was located, but there was no way he would be able to find its exact whereabouts easily.

Back then, to enter the Red Lotus Ridge Poison Hall, he had to depend on the local Great Herb King to lead the way. Otherwise, there was a good chance he wouldn't have been able to find it even if he were to spend his entire life searching for it.

This was also the main reason why the Poison Hall was able to preserve its lineage for so long despite its betrayal back then.

After taking a look around the city, Zhang Xuan suddenly noticed a bustling tavern not too far away.

"Severing Sorrows Pavilion... Severing one's sorrows through joy and wine, a fine name indeed!" Chuckling softly, he made his way towards it.

A tavern was usually the place of gathering for those from all walks of life, making it an ideal location to scout out intelligence. Besides, after flying for more than ten days, Zhang Xuan's mouth was already craving a bite of good food. It would be a good opportunity for him to let loose for a bit and try out the local delicacies.

"Guest, this way please..." An attendant welcomed Zhang Xuan with a fawning smile.

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded as he casually tossed a middle-tier spirit stone over. "Give me the quietest seat inside."

"Sure thing!" The attendant's eyes lit up as he hurriedly led the way, "I will bring you to your seat!"

A middle-tier spirit stone was no longer of much value to Zhang Xuan, but to weaker cultivators or ordinary citizens at the lower end of the social stratum, it was a huge fortune.

After settling down in his seat, Zhang Xuan casually ordered several of the local specialties before gesturing for the attendant to come closer.

"This is my first time in Jingyuan City. If I need to gather some information, who would be the best person for me to go to?"

There was no way a humble attendant of a tavern could possibly have any substantial news about the Poison Hall, so Zhang Xuan couldn't be bothered to ask directly about it. Thus, he decided to ask for a reliable news source instead.

The sale of information was always a lucrative trade regardless of location. It wasn't rare for cultivators to offer astronomical prices in exchange for vital information, so information brokers could always be found in most cities.

"If you wish to gather information, the best place to go is, without doubt, the [Inkcloud Quarter]! They command the most extensive intelligence network in Jingyuan City, and the information they provide is also the most accurate of all..." the attendant said with a hushed voice.

"Inkcloud Quarter?"

"Un. It's the biggest marketplace of our Jingyuan City. Not only do they sell artifacts, pills, and other common commodities, but they also deal in information as well! Even intelligence on the Hongyuan royal family isn't beyond reach there! Just a while ago, someone had specially purchased intelligence on Princess Yu Fei-er, planning to head to the capital to propose to her..."

Due to the generous tip Zhang Xuan had offered him earlier, the attendant was extremely friendly.

"Propose?" Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan shook his head.

Given Yu Fei-er's explosive temper, anyone who dared to propose to her would probably be pummeled to death on the spot.

However, the fact that the Inkcloud Quarter had intelligence on Princess Yu Fei-er despite their long distance from the capital was a testimony to the capability of the Inkcloud Quarter.

Zhang Xuan proceeded to ask about its location, and after learning that it wasn't too far away, he dismissed the attendant.

Despite how remote Jingyuan City was, the food was excellent, and Zhang Xuan devoured it delightfully. After he finished, he got up and left for Inkcloud Quarter.

Inkcloud Quarter was a massive market dealing in almost everything that one could think of it, be it paintings, ores, formation plates, or anything of the sort.

There were several guards standing imposingly at the entrance, each of them exuding a powerful aura that deterred any potential troublemakers. They were all

Transcendent Mortal 7-dan Perfect Harmonization realm experts.

Such strength would definitely place them amongst the ranks of the top experts of Huanyu Empire, and yet, they were serving as mere guards here. It seemed like there was indeed something extraordinary about Inkcloud Quarter.

Walking in, Zhang Xuan found himself surrounded by vendors and huge crowds walking to and fro. It was extremely lively.

Intelligence regarding the Poison Hall was definitely classified, so it was impossible for the ordinary vendors around him to be selling such vital information. Thus, Zhang Xuan walked straight up to the front desk, and with a cold face, he commanded, "Get your manager here. I have something to ask him!"

As he said those words, he lifted his forefinger. A surge of incomparably sharp sword qi that sent shivers down one's spine flickered on the tip of his finger, revealing his Nascent Saint pinnacle cultivation.

"Y-yes!"

Seeing that the man before him was far beyond his means to deal with, the front desk receptionist hurriedly got up and left. Not too long later, he returned with a middle-aged man.

"Esteemed guest, I am the manager of Inkcloud Quarter, Zhu Xiao. May I know what request you have of us?"

The middle-aged man was a Half-Saint cultivator. While he was surprised by Zhang Xuan's powerful aura, he was still able to retain his composure as he maintained an attitude that was neither humble nor arrogant before him.

"Arrange a quiet chamber for me. I have something important to talk about!" Zhang Xuan glanced at Zhu Xiao nonchalantly and said.

"This way, please!" Without any hesitation, Zhu Xiao stepped forward and led the way.

They quickly arrived at a private room. Zhang Xuan took a look around the area before nodding in approval.

He really had to say that he was impressed by the extent to which the Inkcloud Quarter

had gone in order to maintain the confidentiality of their dealings. There were all kinds of formations set up around the room, such that even if a battle were to occur within, those outside still wouldn't notice a thing. Its security was indubitably top-notch.

"Are you satisfied with this room?" Zhu Xiao asked with a smile.

"Not too bad." Zhang Xuan nodded. After which, he turned a sharp gaze towards Zhu Xiao and spoke, "I want intelligence on the Poison Hall. Offer a price!"

"Poison Hall?" Zhu Xiao frowned. He shook his head and said, "I'm afraid that I will have to disappoint you. We don't have any news on the Poison Hall here, so I will have to ask you to ask something else."

"You don't have any news on the Poison Hall?"

At this point, Zhang Xuan abruptly burst into a hearty laughter. Flicking his wrist, he took out a pile consisting of more than a hundred high-tier spirit stones and asked, "Is this enough?"

Upon seeing the huge pile of high-tier spirit stones, Zhu Xiao's eyebrows visibly shot up in astonishment despite his attempt to retain his composure. Eventually, he clenched his jaws and replied, "My apologies, but this isn't a problem of money. Our Inkcloud Quarter truly doesn't have any news on the Poison Hall!"

Paying no heed to the other party's words, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and took out another gleaming pile of five hundred high-tier spirit stones. In an instant, the spiritual energy in the air grew considerably more concentrated.

"Is this enough?"

"T-this..."

Zhu Xiao's face paled. "This matter is already beyond my jurisdiction. I have to report it to my boss..."

Chapter 979

Poisoning

He was only the manager of the Inkcloud Quarter. A trade which involved a humongous sum of several hundred high-tier spirit stones, there was no way he was qualified to make a judgement on this matter.

"Go ahead!" Zhang Xuan waved his hand.

If it was that easy to uncover news on the Poison Hall, there was no way the old principal would have been unable to find it back then.

Knowing that it would be a difficult fight, Zhang Xuan decided to throw out huge amounts of money out right from the start so as to force the other party to negotiate with him.

Even if the other party really didn't have any concrete news on the Poison Hall, the Inkcloud Quarter, given its long establishment in Jingyuan City, should still have some clues regarding the matter.

Had it been someone else, there would be no way they could tell whether the clues were true or not, thus making it potentially a futile attempt. However, it was different for Zhang Xuan. He could easily ascertain the authenticity of those clues and dig out the whereabouts of the Poison Hall with certainty, even if it was located beneath the ground.

"Yes!" Zhu Xiao quickly rushed out of the room, headed for a vast room that stood at the heart of the Inkcloud Quarter.

"Boss!" Stepping into the vast room, Zhu Xiao immediately clasped his fist and greeted the middle-aged man before him.

The boss of Inkcloud Quarter, Hu Yunsheng. A Saint 1-dan pinnacle expert!

"What's wrong?" Hu Yunsheng was in the midst of flipping through some documents when Zhu Xiao abruptly entered. Lifting his gaze, he asked calmly.

"Boss, I just met with a guest earlier, and the other party requested to purchase... information regarding the Poison Hall!" Zhu Xiao reported.

"Information regarding the Poison Hall?" Hu Yunsheng frowned. "Just do the usual, tell him that we have no such news and drive him away!"

"I told him that that we don't have any news on the Poison Hall, but the other party immediately took out more than five hundred high-tier spirit stones and insisted on purchasing it! As such, I came over here to report the matter to you!" Zhu Xiao swiftly went through the details of the matter.

"Five hundred high-tier spirit stones?" Hu Yunsheng narrowed his eyes in astonishment.

The fact that even the esteemed school heads of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, be it School Head Mo or School Head Zhao, could only afford to take out a few dozen high-tier spirit stones at any point in time went to show just how huge a fortune it actually was.

Five hundred high-tier spirit stones... Even the annual profits of the entire Inkcloud Quarter didn't amount to that!

"That's right!" Zhu Xiao nodded.

"What kind of person is he?" Hu Yunsheng asked with a deep frown.

Pondering for a moment, Zhu Xiao replied, "He seems to be in his forties. He is slightly stronger than me, possessing a cultivation of Nascent Saint pinnacle. As for his background, I am not too sure about that either..."

"A Nascent Saint pinnacle cultivator was actually able to take out five hundred spirit stones at once?" Hu Yunsheng could hardly believe what he was hearing.

Even he didn't have five hundred high-tier spirit stones in his possession at the moment, so how could a Nascent Saint pinnacle cultivator possess such wealth?

Could it be that the other party had originated from some powerful organization or affluent clan?

"Bring me over to take a look!" Hu Yunsheng stood up and said.

"Yes... But boss, we really don't have much news regarding the Poison Hall at hand. If he were to insist on it, what should we do?" Zhu Xiao asked.

Even within Jingyuan City, the Poison Hall was an existence shrouded in secrecy. As extensive as the intelligence network of Inkcloud Quarter was, they were still unable to uncover anything much about the Poison Hall, let more its whereabouts.

"I will decide depending on the circumstances later on. If he has a powerful backing, I can consider handing over the information we have gathered on the Poison Hall thus far. However, if he is just an ordinary nouveau riche 1... there is no way our Inkcloud Quarter is going to let a fat lamb who has wandered into our midst escape!" A cold glint flashed across Hu Yunsheng's eyes.

Inkcloud Quarter wasn't just an ordinary business, it was the dominating power of Jingyuan City's underworld as well. If the other party had a powerful backing behind him, he might still have to think twice before acting. Otherwise, for an ordinary Nascent Saint cultivator to hold so much wealth in his possession... he would really be letting himself down if he were to allow this juicy piece of meat to flee from his mouth!

"This... But if he has so many high-tier spirit stones on him, even if he was a nouveau riche, he would have surely recruited experts to protect him..." Zhu Xiao was still worried.

Only with power would one be able to protect one's own wealth, this was common sense to all cultivators.

For the other party to publicly flaunt his wealth without the slightest hint of fear, even if he didn't have any powerful clan or organization backing him, it was almost certain that he must have prepared a hand in case such a situation arose. In other words, if they were to lay their hands on the other party, it could possibly bring trouble upon Inkcloud Quarter.

"Hehe, wasn't he looking into news concerning the Poison Hall? Surely it shouldn't be too surprising for him to be killed by the Poison Hall, right? As long as we were to conceal it well, we will be able to get away with it easily!" Hu Yunsheng sneered coldly.

"This..." Zhu Xiao hesitated for a moment before nodding.

That was indeed true.

The Poison Hall was intent on concealing its whereabouts, so anyone who was seeking them could very well pose a threat to them... As long as they were to carry it out well, there would be no one who would suspect Inkcloud Quarter to be the culprit.

"Alright, prepare the gourd of fine wine in our storage for our guest. Later on, pay careful attention and act on my command!" Hu Yunsheng waved his hand and said.

"Yes!" Zhu Xiao nodded before quickly rushing off.

He returned a moment later, and the both of them made their way for the chamber which Zhang Xuan was currently seated at.

"I heard that you are intending to purchase information regarding the Poison Hall?" Upon arriving in the room, Hu Yunsheng took a seat and began assessing the middle-aged man before his eyes carefully.

The other party commanded a powerful aura, he was indeed a Nascent Saint pinnacle cultivator. However, his appearance was unfamiliar, probably not a local to Jingyuan City.

There were only that many Nascent Saint cultivators in Jingyuan City and the surrounding cities. Inkcloud Quarter had a detailed profile on every single Nascent Saint expert in the vicinity, and there was none that matched the characteristics of the middle-aged man before him.

"That's right." Zhang Xuan replied impassively.

Hu Yunsheng lowered his head contemplatively for a moment before raising his gaze to say, "The Poison Hall is not only shrouded in secrecy, they are also known for being vindictive. If they were to find out that we have leaked their news, we might very well suffer their vengeance... May I know how I can address you, and what your motive for seeking the Poison Hall is? Pardon me for being a little wary over here, but we will have to take that into consideration before coming to a decision."

"I am Sun Qiang." Zhang Xuan replied.

As the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, his real name was extremely well-known throughout Hongyuan Empire, so it would be unsafe for him to use it even when disguised. On the other hand, his butler, Sun Qiang, wasn't too well-known in comparison. Even if the other party was aware of Sun Qiang's existence, the

other party would just think that it was a coincidence.

"Sun Qiang? Are you... from Qingyuan City's Sun Clan?" Hu Yunsheng pondered for a moment before asking.

"That's not it." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"Then... the descendant of the leader of Lofty Tiger Sect?" Hu Yunsheng continued.

Zhang Xuan shook his head once more.

"Then..."

Hu Yunsheng consecutively asked about more than a dozen famous individuals and clans in Hongyuan Empire going by the surname of Sun, but Zhang Xuan shook his head at all of them.

"Ask no more, I am just a normal, wandering cultivator. I have no particular background that is worthy of note. The reason why I am looking into the Poison Hall is due to some private matters that I have to settle. Don't worry, I won't implicate anyone in this matter, and I won't tell anyone that I have obtained my information from your Inkcloud Quarter!" Seeing that the other party was determined to dig up his background, Zhang Xuan waved his hand impatiently and said.

"A normal, wandering cultivator?" Hu Yunsheng chuckled softly. "I see. Since Brother Sun has already said so, I won't waste your time any further. I have a few pieces of information regarding the Poison Hall, but they aren't too detailed... Zhu Xiao, bring them over for Brother Sun!"

"Yes!" Zhu Xiao nodded and got to his feet.

Before he could walk out of the room, Hu Yunsheng suddenly issued another instruction. "Before you gather the documents, bring some fine wine and delicacies here first!"

After which, Hu Yunsheng turned to Zhang Xuan and said, "Brother Sun, it will take some time to compile the information, so I will have to ask you to be patient. Meanwhile, allow me to interest you in some food and drink!"

Not too long later, Zhu Xiao returned with a few plates of side dishes and a gourd of

wine before leaving once more.

"Brother Sun, please!" Chuckling softly, Hu Yunsheng poured a cup of wine and handed it over to Zhang Xuan.

Zhang Xuan took the cup of wine and asked with an earnest smile, "May I know how I should address you?"

"Ah, how could I have forgotten to introduce myself... My surname is Hu!" Hu Yunsheng said.

"Hu? I happen to have a friend who goes by the surname of Hu as well, and she is as wily as a fox, making her a really difficult person to deal with. How good it will be if she could be as honest as Brother Hu..." Zhang Xuan spoke meaningfully.

"Hahaha, the foundation of business lies in trust. How can I possibly run a business without being honest?" Without the slightest bit of embarrassment, Hu Yunsheng said.

"Well said! If only there are more honest merchants like you out there in the world, the world will be a better place! Cheers!"

Zhang Xuan lifted his cup and gulped the wine down.

"Cheers!" Hu Yunsheng chuckled softly as he brought the wine cup to his lips before placing it down once more.

Seeing that Hu Yunsheng had only taken a sip, Zhang Xuan eyebrows shot up, "Brother Hu, aren't you looking down on me 2?"

"Of course not! I just have a lot of things to attend to, and alcohol doesn't go well with me. So..." Hu Yunsheng's lips twitched for an instant before he hurriedly explained.

"What do you mean by alcohol doesn't go well with you? As a businessman, you should be more decisive when you drink! Come, let me help you!" Grabbing Hu Yunsheng's shoulder with his right hand and the wine cup with his left, Zhang Xuan chuckled as he lifted the cup up to the other party's mouth.

Seeing that Zhang Xuan was actually going to force feed him, Hu Yunsheng's face darkened in displeasure. "There is no need to trouble Brother Sun for this. I can do it myself..."

"It is no trouble at all. We are brothers, there is no need to stand on ceremony..." Zhang Xuan said as his lips curled up into a bright smile.

"I..." Seeing that the other party was intent on forcing that cup of wine into his mouth, Hu Yunsheng immediately drove his zhenqi to struggle himself free from the other party's grip and knock the wine cup away. To his horror, he realized that he was unable to move at all, as if someone had bound him tightly.

The other party's zhenqi felt like unbreakable shackles on his body, rendering him completely immobile.

"This..." Hu Yunsheng's eyes narrowed in alarm as cold sweat trickled down his back.

He had let his guard down, thinking that the other party was just a Nascent Saint cultivator. But upon feeling the astounding strength the other party was exerting, he immediately realized... How could a fellow possessing such strength possibly be a Nascent Saint? Even with his Saint 1-dan pinnacle cultivation, he would only be utterly crushed in a fight!

The other party had been feigning weakness all along to lure him in!

Just where in the world did this fellow come from?

To make things worse, the other party seemed to have noticed that something was wrong with his wine and was force feeding it to him...

"Come, drink! There is no need to get courteous with me here!" In the midst of his shock, the wine cup was already right before his mouth. Without any time to react, the wine was already poured down his throat.

"Cough cough cough!" Choked by the wine, Hu Yunsheng coughed so violently that tears began streaming down his face.

It took a while before he could recover from it, but in the next moment, he saw the other party grabbing the entire wine gourd, and before he could say a word, the other party stuffed it into his mouth.

Gudong, gudong, gudong!

Wine flowed relentlessly down his throat, nearly taking his final breath away with it.

That was wine laced with lethal poison! Even if he had the antidote, his body would still suffer tremendous damage from drinking so much at once! Who could have known that in his attempt to hunt down a prey, he would be done in by his prey instead?

Gugugugu!

In just a few moments, with his mouth pried open by the other party's fingers, the entire gourd of wine gushed into his body.

After forcing the wine down his throat, the other party finally released his grip and looked at him with a radiant smile, "How was the wine? Good?"

"You..." Hu Yunsheng pointed a finger at Zhang Xuan with a face reddened with rage when a bout of sharp pain suddenly struck him. He hurriedly took out a pill and popped it into his mouth. After which, he glared at the middle-aged man with killing intent flaring from his eyes, "Who in the world are you?"

"I am Sun Qiang. Didn't I tell you that earlier?" Zhang Xuan chuckled softly. At which, he suddenly patted his face, and as if having just recalled something, he said, "Oh, I nearly forgot. I just added some extra ingredients to your wine, so it might be a little more potent than usual. You said that you don't do well with alcohol, so I hope that it isn't too strong for you..."

Right after saying those words, Hu Yunsheng's face paled and his entire body stiffened. 'Eurgh!', a mouthful of blood spurted from his mouth.

"You poisoned me?" Hu Yunsheng's eyes narrowed in horror.

"You are a poison master?"

Chapter 980

Sepulture Flower

He had been keeping a close watch over the other party's actions while the poisoned wine was forced down his throat. From the very beginning, the other party had never touched the wine at all, coming into contact with the cup and gourd only. Considering the discreet poisoning method, there was no doubt that the other party was a poison master!

More importantly, the poison was so potent that even a Saint 1-dan pinnacle expert like him was rendered powerless. Without a doubt, the other party must be a 6-star poison master at the very minimum.

For a poison master of your caliber to not even know the location of the Poison Hall... Were you intentionally doing this to teach me a lesson?

It was laughable that he even tried to use poison against the other party... In the end, he ended up getting a taste of his own medicine...

"Hah, why would I bother looking for the whereabouts of the Poison Hall if I wasn't a poison master?" Sneering coldly, Zhang Xuan snapped his fingers and commanded, "Come, puke a mouthful out for me!"

Zhang Xuan had known from the very start that the other party had poisoned the wine. Through driving his Heaven's Path zhenqi, he was able to neutralize it easily. After which, he secretly infused two surges of Heaven's Path zhenqi into the wine, thus lacing it with lethal poison.

Due to the incredible purity of the Heaven's Path zhenqi, it was capable of infiltrating any single acupoint and organ of a human body, making it nigh impossible to guard against it. Even with a cultivation of Saint 1-dan pinnacle, the other party was still completely powerless against it.

"AHHH..."

Right after Zhang Xuan said those words, his zhenqi rampaged within Hu Yunsheng's

body and induced a scream of agony from him, followed by a spurt of a fresh blood.

"Y-you... I will kill you!" With a pale face, Hu Yunsheng forcefully drove his zhenqi and charged at Zhang Xuan.

As the boss of Inkcloud Quarter, he was an existence that even the city lord of Jingyuan City had to defer to. Yet, for him to actually be poisoned by a Nascent Saint, the immense fury coursing through his veins turned his face was red as lava. He leaped forward vehemently and crushed his palm down upon Zhang Xuan.

"You sure aren't obedient at all. Come down!"

Sitting idly in his seat, Zhang Xuan lifted his eyelid to glance at Hu Yunsheng idly before snapping his fingers once more.

Pah!

Before the palm could even strike, Hu Yunsheng's entire body jolted as if he had been electrified. He crashed back down onto the ground, his body splayed out as if a toad.

"T-this poison... is sentient?" Hu Yunsheng gasped in disbelief. His body trembled uncontrollably upon the realization, and his face suddenly became ghastly pale.

Poisons could be classified into two categories, non-sentient and sentient

Non-sentient poison was dangerous, but more often than not, they could be resolved by finding the correct antidote. On the other hand, sentient poison was capable of averting danger or even obeying commands. It might not be possible for one to resolve the poison even with the antidote in hand.

However, concocting a sentient poison was an extremely complicated process. Just like gu, it had to be reared. Even at the bare minimum, one had to be an 8-star master teacher to be able to concoct it. Could it be that the middle-aged man before him was such a poison master? (Gu is basically a poisonous insect which can be planted into another's body to create certain effects, such as forcing a person to love another, put one under great suffering, control the other's mind, etc. It is more commonly associated to certain ethnic tribes in ancient China, and can be considered as a combination of black magic and poison.)

But to become an 8-star master teacher, one had to possess a cultivation of Saint 6-

dan at the very minimum! Every single person who had reached that level was a famed expert of the Master Teacher Continent, so why would such a person possibly come to such a remote little city in search of the local Poison Hall?

In that instant, Hu Yunsheng's heart trembled in trepidation as fear swiftly overwhelmed him.

"Hehe!" Zhang Xuan chuckled softly, not bothering to explain at all.

He could control his Heaven's Path zhenqi with his will remotely. As such, even though his zhenqi wasn't sentient, he could easily produce effects similar to one.

But of course, this only applied at close distances. If he was too far away from the target, Zhang Xuan's psyche would be unable to reach his Heaven's Path zhenqi, thus making it impossible for him to control it anymore.

A true sentient poison would be like his Innate Fetal Poison. It would be impossible to struggle free of it no matter where one went, rendering the afflicted completely helpless before it.

Realizing that there was no way he could stand up against the other party, Hu Yunsheng's face reddened and paled intermittently, and after a long while, he gritted his teeth tightly and uttered, "I... admit defeat!"

What else could he possibly do in this situation? He couldn't defeat the other party, and the poison he had sustained further worsened his position. At this point, his life and death hinged on the other party's whim.

He thought that he had truly struck gold this time round, but in the end, it turned out to just be a bait to lure him in. Just the thought of it left him incredibly stifled within.

"This is more like it..." Receiving Hu Yunsheng's surrender, Zhang Xuan smiled in satisfaction. "I want to know everything you have on the Poison Hall."

Hu Yunsheng gritted his teeth and replied, "Honestly speaking, despite the extensive connections that our Inkcloud Quarter has, it doesn't know much about the Poison Hall. They are an extremely careful bunch..."

"You just have to tell me whether the Poison Hall is located in the vicinity of Jingyuan City." Zhang Xuan said.

"Yes!" Hu Yunsheng nodded. "In the past few years, there have been quite a few people seeking the whereabouts of the Poison Hall as well, so I have been keeping a lookout myself too. Based on the information I have received so far, I am certain that it is in the Viridian Cloud Sea. However, I still don't have enough information to pinpoint the specific location. Furthermore, according to what I have heard, it seems like it is impossible to enter the Poison Hall without a special token, even if one were to find the real location!"

"Viridian Cloud Sea?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

The Viridian Cloud Sea was the largest inland sea of Hongyuan Empire, spanning a distance of around several hundred thousand kilometers from one end to another. Vast and boundless, there were countless ferocious spirit beasts and saint beasts in its midst. Even a Saint 5-dan expert would hesitate to enter it.

If the Poison Hall was in the midst of the Viridian Cloud Sea and was concealed by a formation, it was nigh impossible for one to find it without knowing the exact location.

It was no wonder why the old principal was only able to track the Poison Hall down to Jingyuan City. It was indeed really well-hidden.

"Yes. An elder of the Poison Hall unintentionally leaked the news while he was purchasing something at our Inkcloud Quarter a while back... Other than that, I really know nothing else other than that..." Hu Yunsheng said with a reddened face.

Afflicted by the other party's poison, if he didn't receive the antidote soon, he could very well lose his life. However, he really didn't have the crucial information which the other party wanted to know.

In truth, the news that the Poison Hall was located in the Viridian Cloud Sea... could be considered to be completely useless. The Viridian Cloud Sea spanned over such a huge area, and it was teeming with countless saint beasts on top of that. Who could possibly have the strength and time to comb the entire area?

"Purchasing something at your Inkcloud Quarter?" Paying no heed to Hu Yunsheng's worry, Zhang Xuan frowned at the few other words that the other party said instead. "What did the elder of the Poison Hall buy from you here?"

"There was a hundred-year-old Sepulture Flower for sale in a previous auction we conducted. It is an extremely rare medicinal herb which serves as an excellent

mediating factor in the concoction of many poisons, so it caught the attention of one of the elders of the Poison Hall... Eventually, he took it away at a very low price..." Hu Yunsheng said with a livid face.

He had spent over a hundred high-tier spirit stones in order to obtain the Sepulture Flower, and he had expected to profit greatly from it... Yet, that Poison Hall elder actually poisoned more than a dozen of his subordinates, and even he himself was nearly afflicted as well. Left with no choice, he could only agree to selling it at a discounted price.

It could be said that he had made a huge loss in that deal, and even a year's worth of profits wasn't sufficient for him to cover that loss.

This was precisely reason why Inkcloud Quarter rarely dealt in medicinal herbs anymore. The risk was simply too great. If poison masters were to willfully steal their medicinal herbs, there was nothing they could do about it.

"Do you have any medicinal herbs that the Poison Hall will require in your Inkcloud Quarter? It will be best for it to have as high a maturity as possible so that it can lure their men over." After a moment of contemplation, Zhang Xuan asked.

Hu Yunsheng might have been unaware of the location of the Poison Hall, but the elders of the Poison Hall themselves were bound to know.

It was entirely possible to use a medicinal ingredient they required to lure them out of their dens. As long as one of them were to appear, he could subdue the other party and force him to lead him to the Poison Hall. This way, the problem would be solved.

While his understanding of poison was still only equivalent to that of a 2-star poison master, he possessed Heaven's Path zhenqi, which could easily neutralize most poison. Even if a 7-star poison master were to appear before him, he had nothing to fear.

But of course, anything beyond that could very well be beyond his means. Take the Innate Fetal Poison for example—its ability to avert danger made it impossible for his Heaven's Path zhenqi to do anything to it.

It was not without reason that the poison masters could instill deep fear in the hearts of the cultivators of the Master Teacher Continent. They did indeed possess capability and strength rivaling their reputation.

Had it not been out of fear of the Master Teacher Pavilion, as well as the high difficulty and risk in pursuing the Way of Poison, there would indubitably have been a seat in the Upper Nine Paths for poison masters.

"Medicinal herbs that the Poison Hall requires?" Understanding the other party's intention, an embarrassed look appeared on Hu Yunsheng's face as he said, "Our Inkcloud Quarter hasn't taken in any medicinal herbs in recent years. Even if we do have a few, they are unlikely to be of much value and won't be sufficient to move the poison masters!"

After the setback that he had suffered, he got a clear glimpse into how fearsome poison masters were. As a result, he had made up his mind to steer clear of the medicinal herb business.

Otherwise, if a few more of such robberies were to occur, wouldn't his Inkcloud Quarter go bankrupt?

"I see... Do you know what kind of medicinal herbs will be able to move the poison masters?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

"Based on what I know, the 7-star poison master examination requires one to concoct a poison capable of killing a Saint 2-dan expert, and such poisons usually require the Sepulture Flower... If anyone were to have a high maturity Sepulture Flower, it will surely draw many poison masters in! Just that... the Sepulture Flower is an extremely rare medicinal herb. To tell you the truth, it was a huge stroke of luck that we were able to obtain it the last time..." Hu Yunsheng said.

"Sepulture Flower?" Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before sighing deeply.

Back during his inauguration ceremony, the saint beasts of the Cloudmist Ridge did give him quite a lot of medicinal herbs. However, there didn't seem to be any Sepulture Flowers amidst the pile. He also didn't recall seeing that medicinal herb amongst the various items he had collected thus far.

It seemed like he would really have to go to some trouble to obtain the Sepulture Flower.

"Since that's the case... I want you to make a public announcement saying that Inkcloud Quarter has recently obtained a 200-year-old Sepulture Flower, and it will be auctioned very soon. It will do as long as we are able to draw the poison masters

in." Zhang Xuan said.

His only goal was to lure the poison masters out, not to obtain a Sepulture Flower. The most important thing he had to do at the moment was to draw the other party out. Everything else could be decided later on.

"This... Even so, I fear that things might not go as planned! If a poison master doesn't utilize any poison, there is no distinctive trait to tell him apart from an ordinary cultivator. If they were to realize that the news regarding auctioning the Sepulture Flower is fake, they might not make a move, and there will be no way for us to confirm their identity." Hu Yunsheng said with a bitter smile.

Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before nodding, "You're right."

Just like the soul oracles, poison masters were one of the most loathed occupations on the Master Teacher Continent. As such, they would rarely display their means publicly unless required, making it nigh impossible to identify them.

He could only assess the information of a cultivator through the Library of Heaven's Path after he had used a battle technique, so it would be futile if the poison master didn't use any battle technique. On top of that, there would surely be many people who would be at the auction. Sieving an individual or two out of a huge crowd was no easy task.

"More importantly, if they were to abide by the rules and purchase the Sepulture Flower through the normal bidding process, that would place us in a very bad position..." Hu Yunsheng continued.

It was true that he was coerced to sell his Sepulture Flower at a loss to a poison master the previous time, but that could have been considered as an exception rather than the norm. After all, it was not like the Poison Hall was a band of heinous villains. If the other party were to purchase the Sepulture Flower honestly but they were unable to produce the medicinal herb... it probably wouldn't take long for the entire Inkcloud Quarter to be destroyed under the poison master's wrath.

"That's right..." Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella in frustration.

It seemed like his idea was not feasible.

At that point, a thought came to Hu Yunsheng, and he said hesitantly, "Actually... there

might be no need for us to feign it. The Sepulture Flower might be rare, but... I just recalled a person who could very well have it, and the maturity is bound to exceed a hundred years at that!"

"Oh? Who is it?" Hearing that someone had the Sepulture Flower, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

"I am not too sure what his name is, but he is a rather strange person. Everyone addresses him as \[Eccentric Old Man\]. He is quite into herbology, and he has accumulated quite a few precious medicinal herbs. He also has quite a collection of artifacts as well. The Sepulture Flower which I obtained the previous time around came from him... If you were to find him, you might be able to find another Sepulture Flower." Hu Yunsheng said.

Chapter 981

Eccentric Old Man

"Eccentric Old Man? Where is he at? Bring me over to meet him!" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

Since there was someone who had the Sepulture Flower, all he had to do was to purchase it! There was no need for him to hesitate at all!

"This..." Hearing those words, Hu Yunsheng smiled bitterly. "It isn't that easy! The medicinal herbs in his possession are not for sale. It is impossible to purchase them no matter how much money one had. On top of that, the Eccentric Old Man has a very bad temper as well. There was once which the Jingyuan City Lord required a rare medicinal herb urgently, so he prepared a great amount of spirit stones that would suffice to buy three of that medicinal herbs at market price. Yet... he was thrown out the door before he could even speak a word..."

"The city lord was thrown out? Is the Eccentric Old Man very powerful?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

The city lord of Jingyuan City had to be at least a Saint 1-dan cultivator at the very minimum. Yet, for the other party to throw him out the door... it seemed like the Eccentric Old Man wasn't going to be an easy person to deal with.

"His cultivation is on the same level as me, Saint 1-dan pinnacle. However, he has a Saint 2-dan tamed beast with him..." Hu Yunsheng replied.

"He is a beast tamer?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

Even taming a saint beast weaker than one was already arduously difficult, but the Eccentric Old Man was actually able to tame a Saint 2-dan beast despite only possessing a cultivation of Saint 1-dan. That was truly an impressive feat.

One must know that no one, not even School Head Mo, in the Master Teacher Academy had managed to achieve this feat! Thus, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but be bewildered as to why a talented figure like the other party would choose to reside at the remote

Jingyuan City.

"I am not too sure either, but that tamed beast obeys every single one of his words. If anyone tries to cause trouble, it would kick them out immediately. Even I dare not do anything to it..." Hu Yunsheng said.

After chatting for a while longer, Zhang Xuam couldn't help but shake his head.

Through Hu Yunsheng's words, it could be seen that the Eccentric Old Man was indeed a rather peculiar person.

The Eccentric Old Man was indubitably a huge hoarder of valuable artifacts and medicinal herbs. Typically speaking, hoarders accumulated their goods in wait for a hike in the market price so that they could profit off their collection. However, putting aside selling his collection, the Eccentric Old Man didn't even allow guests to enter his residence!

"Bring me over to take a look!"

Regardless of how eccentric that fellow was, Zhang Xuan knew he would need to meet him. Otherwise, he wouldn't have anything to lure the poison masters in.

In the ten days flight to Jingyuan City, Wei Ruyan remained unconscious throughout the entire duration. This went to say that her condition was steadily declining, and her life would be in grave danger if she wasn't treated soon. Time wasn't on their side, so Zhang Xuan had to grasp onto everything there was.

"You still intend to look for him?" Hu Yunsheng's face turned bitter. "There is no way he will let us through the doors of his residence, and he might even send his tamed beast after us..."

The person before him had just arrived at Jingyuan City, so it was only natural that he knew not of how fearsome the Eccentric Old Man was. On the other hand, he had experienced it with his own body. A person whom even the city lord was helpless before, what could they possibly do?

Due to the many valuable artifacts and medicinal herbs that the Eccentric Old Man possessed, he had tried to visit the other party to negotiate with him many times, but he would be thrown out each time without fail.

"It's fine, I know what I am doing." Zhang Xuan replied.

His current identity was that of a poison master and not a master teacher. He didn't need to abide by the troublesome rules that master teachers had to follow.

When there is a will, there is a way. There was bound to be a way which he could obtain the Sepulture Flower from the other party.

"Alright then." Seeing that the other party had his mind made up, Hu Yunsheng knew that it was impossible for him to convince the other party otherwise. His life was still in the other party's hand, so he could only agree to it.

Just as the both of them walked out of the room, Zhu Xiao also happened to be seen walking towards them. At the moment that Zhu Xiao saw the both of them, he couldn't help but notice that not only was the middle-aged man was still alive, his boss was even walking subserviently behind the middle-aged boss. In that instant, disbelief covered his entire face.

However, there was no way Hu Yunsheng could explain anything to Zhu Xiao at this moment, so he quickly instructed Zhu Xiao to look after Inkcloud Quarter before leading Zhang Xuan to the Eccentric Old Man's residence.

Had he not been poisoned, he could consider hinting Zhu Xiao to gather a few men and hide in the surroundings to prepare an ambush on Zhang Xuan. However, as long as he remained afflicted with the poison, he dared not to do so. Otherwise, he could very well die before making a move.

Furthermore, even if an ambush was carried out, he had a feeling that his subordinates would be the one who would be lying on the ground at the end of it, poisoned.

If poison masters could be killed that easily, the lineage of the Poison Hall wouldn't have persevered for so long.

The residence of the Eccentric Old Man was located not too far from Inkstone Quarter. It took only a brief walk before an average-sized residence came into sight.

The entrance doors were tightly shut, and there was a plaque which stated that no guests were welcomed in the residence. The surroundings were cold and desolate, not a single guard was in sight. There was no way one could tell that it was the home of an esteemed Saint realm expert just by looking at it.

"Knock on the door!" Walking up, Zhang Xuan glanced at Hu Yunsheng and commanded.

"W-we are just going to knock on the door like that? Are you sure there is no need to prepare a visiting scroll?" Hu Yunsheng was taken aback.

It was manners to present a visiting scroll ahead of one's visit to indicate one's identity and reason for the visit... Would they really be able to enter just by knocking like that?

The other party was already a hot-tempered man. If they were to act so discourteously on top of that, wouldn't that just place them in a worse position?

"Just knock on the door." Instead of replying, Zhang Xuan urged Hu Yunsheng on with a smile.

Be it whether the other party was eccentric or not, as long as he was human, he was bound to have desires and goals. As long as that was the case, he was confident that he would be able to persuade the other party to sell the medicinal herb to him.

"Alright then..." Seeing that Zhang Xuan wasn't listening to his advice, Hu Yunsheng shook his head as he walked up to the door and knocked on it.

Dong dong dong dong!

The knocking sounds were particularly resounding in the quiet streets.

Jiyaaa!

Before the doors to the Eccentric Old Man's residence opened, the doors to the residence opposite to it opened instead. Following which, an old man and a servant walked out.

"There is no point knocking. The owner of that residence won't meet with you." Glancing at the duo, the old man advised.

"Won't meet with us?" Zhang Xuan frowned. "Are you a subordinate of the Eccentric Old Man?"

"Of course not. I am just an admirer of his..." The old man waved his hands casually.

"I see. Continue knocking!" Hearing that the old man had nothing to do with the Eccentric Old Man, Zhang Xuan turned around and commanded Hu Yunsheng.

"You..." Seeing how that fellow refused to listen to his advice, the old man frowned in displeasure.

The face of the servant beside him also turned livid in anger. He walked up and glared at Zhang Xuan furiously, "How dare you speak to our old master like that! Do you know who he is?"

Zhang Xuan took a brief glance at the servant before turning his gaze away impassively, paying no heed to the other party at all.

Who cares who your old master is! Do you know who I am?

I am just afraid that your heart might not be able to take the blow!

Dong dong dong!

The knocking continued.

Not expecting to be ignored, the servant's complexion turned awful. "Our old master is the head of the Physician Guild, Master Zhou Xuan!"

"Zhou Xuan?" Zhang Xuan shook his head and said, "Never heard of him before. Continue knocking!"

"Yes!" Hu Yunsheng's lips twitched.

He didn't have much interaction with Zhou Xuan in the past, so he only felt that the other party looked familiar. However, upon hearing the introduction, it immediately came back to him.

The head of the Physician Guild... Even the city lord would treat him with utmost respect, not daring to offend him in the slightest. Yet, this fellow actually disregarded him altogether... Just the thought of it left him frenzied.

However, with his life in the other party's hand, he could only feign ignorance and continue knocking on the doors.

On the other hand, both the servant and Zhou Xuan were leaping with anger.

As the guild leader of the Jingyuan City Physician Guild, Zhou Xuan's standing was comparable to the city lord... After all, all humans would eventually be wounded or fall ill at some point in their life.

As such, while there were cultivators who dared to offend the leaders of the other guilds, there were none who were willing to get on Zhou Xuan's bad side.

Yet, this fellow actually disregarded Zhou Xuan, treating him as if he was air...

"Didn't you hear my words? Our old master is a 6-star physician!" the servant said through gritted teeth.

"I heard your words loud and clear. But the person I am looking for is the Eccentric Old Man, not your old master!" Zhang Xuan shook his head.

So what if the other party was a 6-star physician? Three months ago, a vice school head of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, who was a 6-star pinnacle physician as well, attempted to take advantage of him, only to be nearly played to his death. Given so, why should he have to fear the person before him?

"You..." the servant nearly fainted from anger.

6-star physicians were esteemed individuals who were respected no matter where they went, and yet, this fellow actually... didn't care at all?

Damn it!

Did they not know what price they would have to pay for offending a physician?

Just as the servant was about to say something more, Master Zhou Xuan suddenly raised his hand to stop him before walking forward, "This friend over here, I have no idea who you are, and it doesn't matter you know my identity or not. However, Senior Eccentric Old Man is unwilling to meet any guests, so there is no point for you to continue knocking!"

As the head of the Physician Guild, Master Zhou Xuan had met plenty of people in his time. Considering how the other party was able to remain composed even after learning his identity, it could only mean that the other party came from an exceptional

background.

Thus, instead of bellowing at the other party like how his servant did, he chose to take on a persuasive tone.

"Unwilling to meet any guests?"

"That's right. Senior Eccentric Old Man is a hot-tempered person, and he doesn't like to be disturbed. Even our city lord had to send in several visiting scrolls before paying a visit himself. Just a word of advice, you will fare better leaving for the time being and have someone deliver your visiting scroll in first. Otherwise, you will just incur the other party's ire by continue knocking here." Master Zhou Xuan said.

What he said was true.

The Eccentric Old Man was a person who valued peace and didn't like to be disturbed. Even after seeking an audience for so many days, he still wasn't able to meet the Eccentric Old Man. To walk straight up to the doors without even preparing anything, wasn't the other party just asking to be shut out completely?

"I see." Zhang Xuan frowned before shaking his head in frustration. "Since that is the case..."

Zhou Xuan thought that after hearing his piece, the other party would turn around and back down for the moment to prepare his visiting scroll. Yet, the next few words he heard nearly left him keeling over.

"...Hu Yunsheng, knock the door down!" Zhang Xuan waved his hand, as if he was just doing something insignificant.

"Knock the door down?" Hu Yunsheng's lips twitched, and he nearly fainted on the spot.

"That's right." Zhang Xuan shot a glance at Hu Yunsheng, and seeing the fear in the other party's eyes, he sighed deeply. "Forget it, I will do it myself!"

Knowing that Hu Yunsheng dared not provoke the Eccentric Old Man, Zhang Xuan walked up to the door himself and thrust his fist forcefully against it.

Boom!

How could a wooden door possibly be able to withstand his tremendous might? In just a mere moment, countless wooden fragments and splinters flew into the residence.

The buzz from the previous explosion lingered in the air as a cloud of dust slowly drifted down.

"This..."

Seeing the lack of hesitation in the other party's actions, a shiver ran through Zhou Xuan's body, and he nearly blacked out.

I told you that the Eccentric Old Man doesn't like to be disturbed, and yet, you knocked down the other party's door...

Overwhelmed with anger, Zhou Xuan's breathing hastened to the point that he could hardly catch his breath.

Where in this world did this fool come from?

Initially, he also didn't pay much attention to the Eccentric Old Man, thinking that the other party was just putting on airs. A personal visit from the Physician Guild should have other party rushing out to welcome him. But there was one occasion which he chanced on the other party treating a patient that changed his view of the other party entirely. He realized that the other party possessed a mastery in the Way of Medicine that was far beyond his... In other words, the Eccentric Old Man was likely to be either a 6-star pinnacle or a 7-star physician!

It was also for this reason that he rented the residence opposite to the Old Eccentric Man's and delivered a visiting scroll over every single day. He hoped that he would be able to win the other party's favor and learn a hand or two from him.

This was also why he ran out upon hearing that someone knocking on the doors of the Eccentric Old Man's residence. He was hoping that he could possibly leave a good impression with the other party through this.

But... he had already said all that should be said, so why was this fellow so foolish? To knock down the other party's door with a single fist...

What were they to do now?

No doubt about it, the Eccentric Old Man was bound to be fuming!

"Look, isn't the problem settled now? Alright, let's enter!"

Ignoring the frenzied Zhou Xuan, Zhang Xuan waved his hands casually and walked in.

Chapter 982

Green Spittle Poison

The residence wasn't too big, but an astounding amount of spiritual energy had gathered in the area. With just a glance, Zhang Xuan could tell that there was a Spirit Gathering Formation set up in the area. It was of a fairly high grade, grade-6 pinnacle at the minimum.

Due to the presence of the Spirit Gathering Formation, the spiritual energy in the residence was several times more concentrated than that outside. The entire courtyard was densely filled rare medicinal herbs, those which one would hardly see on the market.

"Not bad!" Sweeping a glance at the surroundings, Zhang Xuan saw at least ten stalks of Saint herbs, and his eyes lit up in amazement.

Even You Xu didn't have that many saint herbs in his garden back then.

Jiya!

While Zhang Xuan was still looking around, the doors to one of the rooms opened, and a haggard-looking old man appeared. Looking at Zhang Xuan and the others, he bellowed, "Who let you all in? How brazen!"

He was fuming mad.

After all, there wasn't a person in the world who wouldn't be furious when someone knocked down his door and barged into his residence...

Could there be an even more arrogant act than that?

"Senior, he was the one who forcefully charged in here. I didn't think that he..." Seeing that the Eccentric Old Man was shaking with rage, Zhou Xuan hurriedly explained with quivering lips.

He mustn't lose the good impression he had had accrued with great difficulty due to

this!

"Bluetigris Beast, send our guests out!" Paying no heed to what Zhou Xuan was saying, the Eccentric Old Man commanded forcefully.

Hula!

Right after those words were spoken, a five-meters long saint beast emerged from the room by the side, and every step taken caused the ground to tremor violently.

Blue Tigris Beast, a Saint 2-dan primary stage saint beast! Its fighting prowess was, at the very least, on par with the Byzantium Helios Beast.

The incredible presence it commanded was pressurizing, leaving the faces of those standing before it paling and their bodies trembling.

This was especially so for Hu Yunsheng. In his previous visits to this residence, he had been viciously pummeled by that huge fellow. Meeting the other party once more, he couldn't help but feel an innate fear towards it.

On the other hand, Zhou Xuan subconsciously took several steps back. He knew that there was no way he could match a saint beast of such strength with his current cultivation realm.

"Do you want to leave by yourself, or do you want me to reduce you to a lifeless corpse and toss you out?" The Bluetigris Beast glared at Zhang Xuan with its large, menacing eyes.

In face of the threat, Zhang Xuan chuckled softly and replied, "What if I choose neither of the options?"

"Why are you wasting your breath? Toss him out!" Waving his hands impatiently, the Eccentric Old Man turned around and started walking back into his room.

He had absolute trust in his tamed beast's capability, so he didn't think that there was a need for him to remain on the scene.

Right after he turned his back around, he heard the furious roaring of the Bluetigris Beast. Following which, a powerful shockwave burst into the surroundings, leaving the ground shaking violently.

An instant later, the sound of something being struck up into the sky echoed in the air.

Boom!

That something landed heavily on the ground, raising a cloud of dust in the courtyard.

"Hmph, know your place!" The Eccentric Old Man nodded in satisfaction as he continued walking away.

The Bluetigris Beast had always been known for its ferocity. Just by hearing the sounds, he could tell that that arrogant fellow had been floored.

"Forget it, there is no need to go too far. It'll suffice to teach him a lesson, don't kill him by acci-... Ah?" Shaking his hands, the Eccentric Old Man turned around.

Even though he didn't really care for the other party, a person who dared to barge into his residence couldn't possibly be of low standing. As a person who valued his peace, he didn't cause more trouble out of this matter than it was worth.

However, before he could finish his words, the sight he saw left him body frozen in shock.

It took a long time before he was able to utter any words at all, "W-what is going?"

The scene before him was completely different as the one he had imagined. The Bluetigris Beast should have been teaching the other party a lesson, but at this moment, it was lying right in front of the middle-aged man, licking the other party's palm fawningly, reminiscent of a loyal dog.

What in the world was with this ridiculous sight before him?

I told you to toss him out, not to please him!

Are you my tamed beast or his?

Uncomprehending of the situation before him, he turned his gaze to Zhou Xuan and the others, only to see the three of them completely dumbfounded as well.

Unable to take it any longer, the Eccentric Old Man roared, "Bluetigris Beast, what are you doing?"

This was truly unacceptable. For his own tamed beast to defy his orders and please another man instead, he would become a huge laughingstock should this matter be known to the public!

This was too humiliating!

"Master, I..." The Bluetigris Beast turned around to face his master, but not knowing how it should explain the situation, it scratched its head with its massive paws in frustration.

"Don't worry, allow me!" Smiling, Zhang Xuan walked up to the Eccentric Old Man.

His cultivation was only at Nascent Saint pinnacle, but his true strength was even beyond that of the Saint 2-dan Combat Master Zhuo Qingfeng. As powerful as the Bluetigris Beast was, there was no way it could be a match for him.

After subduing it with a single strike, he was able to force it to obey his orders. He didn't tame the Bluetigris Beast as the latter already had a master, but it no longer posed a threat to him.

"You are Senior Eccentric Old Man, right?" Zhang Xuan asked. "I have a request to ask of you here. I wish to buy a Sepulture Flower from you. The higher maturity it has, the better it will be."

"You have a request to ask of me?" Glancing at the shattered fragments of his doors and his fawning tamed beast, the Eccentric Old Man's lips twitched uncontrollably.

Is this how you make a request with others?

To destroy my doors as soon as you arrive and even leave my tamed beast... in such a weird state... You are clearly not making a request with me but coercing me to submit!

"You want to buy a Sepulture Flower from me? Sure, over my dead body!" With clenched jaws, the Eccentric Old Man roared with a face reddened in anger.

"Over your dead body?" Zhang Xuan sighed deeply before shaking his head helplessly. "Since you said so, I guess I have no choice then!"

After saying those words, his eyebrows shot up and a powerful aura burst forth from him. In the next moment, he charged forward and thrust his fist with incredible might.

Boom!

In that moment, the Eccentric Old Man couldn't help but feel as if a hurricane was headed in his way. He could tell that the other party's cultivation was clearly beneath his, but for some reason, the other party's strength and zhenqi purity was way out of his league.

If that palm were to strike, he could very well be reduced to a slab of meat.

"Damn it!" The Eccentric Old Man's face turned livid.

Exerting the full might of his body into his legs, he hurriedly leaped backward, and his silhouette flashed across space as if a streak of lightning.

He was only at Saint 1-dan, but his movement technique was particularly profound. In the blink of an eye, he had already made a clean escape from Zhang Xuan's palm strike.

Fearing that the other party would continue his attack, he took this opportunity to leap backwards two more times to create a safe distance between them. It was only when he was nearly back-to-back with his residence did he finally come to a halt.

"Ah?"

Heaving a sigh of relief, he looked to his front and saw that the other party was still standing on the spot, seemingly not intending to continue his attack. The other party's hands were behind his back, and his head was tilted slightly upward, seemingly gazing deeply into the heaven. A light breeze blew, and the other party's robe fluttered slightly.

In that instant, the Eccentric Old Man couldn't help but have the impression that the middle-aged man before him was an unparalleled expert, and his face twitched slightly.

Wasn't this change a little too fast? It was just a moment ago that the other party had charged at him ferociously, intending to send him into death's embrace. Yet, in the blink of an eye, he had already transformed into a transcendental expert who had seen through the vicissitudes of life... Even a professional actor couldn't possibly leap from role to role that quickly!

He wasn't the only one who felt crazed by the sight before him. Even Zhou Xuan and

Hu Yunsheng were dumbstruck as well.

It seemed like the greatest strength of the fellow before them wasn't his strength but his ability to switch faces. It was impossible to tell what he was thinking or what he was going to do.

"If you wish to kill me, so be it! Making fun of me? Don't even think about it!" The Eccentric Old Man roared furiously.

He felt that the other party was intentionally toying with him. The other party clearly had the strength to kill him and take the Sepulture Flower easily, but he wasn't making a move at all.

"Making fun of you? You are misunderstanding me!" Zhang Xuan shook his head before continuing, "I would just like to say that it has indeed been hard on you to persevere for so many years under the agony of the \[Green Spittle Poison\]

"Ah? Y-you..." Those words were like a bucket of cold water, extinguishing the flames of anger burning within the Eccentric Old Man. He weakly staggered two steps behind, only to find that he was already pressed against the wall of his residence. He opened his mouth to speak, but not a word would come out from his throat. Disbelief could be seen in his eyes.

Just like what the other party had said, he was indeed afflicted with the deadly Green Spittle Poison. It was only due to his extraordinary mastery in the Way of Medicine that he was able to survive for so long, but even so, he was swiftly approaching his limit... He had never told anyone about this matter before, and he was certain he had never met the middle-aged man before his eyes. So how could the other party tell with a single glance?

He couldn't help but be dumbfounded.

"Green Spittle Poison, a lethal poison contained within the saliva of the Saint 4-dan Green Spittle Snake. Even a Saint 4-dan cultivator could die in moments after being afflicted by it. If I am not mistaken, the reason why you are able to survive for so long is because you have consumed a Sevenflower Grass when you were younger, right?" Before he could ask about it, the middle-aged man had continued nonchalantly.

"I..." A shudder ran through the Eccentric Old Man's body.

The other party was right. He had indeed consumed a Sevenflower Grass by accident when he was seven.

The Sevenflower Grass was a kind of slow-acting poison which gradually wore down one's body. But while it wasn't lethal in the short run, it could cause immense pain to the afflicted. It was for this reason that drove him to work frenziedly on the Way of Medicine, in hopes that he could cure himself one day.

It had been many years since then, and very few of his peers knew of it. For the middle-aged man before him to know about it as well... could the other party be his old friend?

Taking a closer look at the middle-aged man, he shook his head.

Be it the other party's appearance or disposition, neither of them sparked anything in his mind.

He was certain that he had never met the other party before.

"Actually, it is not too difficult for me to deduce all of this. Those who have consumed the Green Spittle Poison will have a slight grayish hue over his body, and their iris will also turn grayish with a thin crimson line at the center, deeply resembling the eyes of a snake from afar.

"But of course, those evidences are only sufficient for me to deduce that you are afflicted with the Green Spittle Poison. What that made me certain that you have consumed a Sevenstar Flower when you were younger is the slightly white hue at your fingertips instead of a grayish one. If I am not mistaken, you must have accidentally pricked yourself with the thorns of the Sevenstar Flower while picking it!" Zhang Xuan said.

"This..."

The Eccentric Old Man's body shuddered once more.

He was still too young back then, so there were several matters that he could hardly remember. However, under the other party's reminder, he did vaguely recall that his finger had been pricked by a Sevenstar Flower in the past.

"The thorns of the Sevenstar Flower contains poison, but it happens to have the effect of neutralizing the venom of the Green Spittle Snake as well. Due to the both poisons

clashing in your body, you were able to avoid immediate fatality. However, it had also become the cause of your immense suffering as well... If I am not mistaken, every night, at the Zi hour, your body will suddenly swell up, and you will feel an unbearable itch in your bones, right?" Zhang Xuan continued. (2300 - 0100)

The Eccentric Old Man's body stiffened.

Seeing the other party's expression, Zhang Xuan knew that he had already achieved his goal. With a bright smile, he said, "Alright. Shall we head to your room to discuss the sales of your Sepulture Flower now?"

The Eccentric Old Man hurriedly lowered his posture and invited Zhang Xuan in with a gesture, "Yes, of course! This way please!"

"Senior..." Hearing the conversation between the both of them, Zhou Xuan was completely bewildered. Subconsciously, he took a step forward, wanting to ask what was happening.

"What are you waiting for? Hurry up and prepare some tea for this venerable gentleman here!"

The Eccentric Old Man berated.

Chapter 983

Curing the Poison

What the heck!

Such a lack of situational awareness, and you still want to take me as your teacher? Dream on!

The Eccentric Old Man clicked his tongue in displeasure.

"..." Zhou Xuan was on the verge of tears.

It was just a moment ago that you looked as if you were going to kill him. How am I to know that you would invite you into your residence as a venerated guest in the next moment?

"What are you dilly-dallying about for?"

As frustrated as Zhou Xuan was, he still turned to his servant and commanded him.

"..." The servant.

"Forget it, I will do it myself!" After a moment of hesitation, Zhou Xuan waved his hand.

It would seem more sincere for him to do it personally.

Thus, he quickly turned around and rush back to his residence.

Paying no heed to Zhou Xuan, Zhang Xuan walked into the room and sat on the main seat.

On the other hand, the Eccentric Old Man sat by the side as he looked at Zhang Xuan respectfully.

A moment of silence drifted in the room.

Eventually, unable to hold himself back anymore, the Eccentric Old Man, with deep anticipation in his eyes, began speaking with a very careful tone, "Elder, regarding my Green Spittle Poison..."

Considering how the other party was able to see through so much of his affliction in a single glance, it was very possible that the other party just might have the remedy to it.

To a person with such sharp eye of discernment, the other party was definitely worthy of being addressed as an elder!

"Green Spittle Poison is a particularly troublesome grade-7 poison. Even a 7-star poison master will find it very difficult to cure it..." Zhang Xuan said.

Hearing those words, the Eccentric Old Man's face paled in despair.

If even a 7-star poison master was unable to cure it, did it mean that there was no hope for his affliction?

"However... I can cure it!" Zhang Xuan said.

"You can cure it?" The Eccentric Old Man's eyes narrowed. Clenching his fists tightly, many emotions flickered across his face, and eventually, he gritted his teeth tightly together and knelt to the ground, "Elder, I beg you to save me!"

He had been tortured under the tyranny of the poison for far too long, and his mind and body were already reaching their limits. If the other party could really save him, putting aside kneeling down, he would be willing to even become the other party's slave without any hesitation!

Dang lang!

Just as the Eccentric Old Man knelt down, Zhou Xuan, who had just prepared the tea, entered the room and saw such an incredulous sight.

Overwhelmed with shock, his grip on the tea tray loosened, and the teapot and teacups fell to the ground and shattered.

He was truly on the verge of losing his mind.

He knew very well how proud a person the Eccentric Old Man was. He, the head of the Physician Guild, had paid respect to the other party for so many days, moving at the other party's beck and call as if a servant, and yet, the other party couldn't even be bothered to spare him a second glance.

On the other party, that fellow had knocked down the Eccentric Old Man's door and made his saint beast weird, but not only was the Eccentric Old Man not angry, he ordered him to prepare tea... and even kneeled down to the fellow!

This was way too mind-blowing!

A person who could very well be a 7-star physician and had not the slightest bit of deference towards the city lord's authority was actually kneeling on the floor to another man...

Zhou Xuan felt as if worldly views had collapsed in that instant, and that his mind was really going to blow up.

"There's no need to stand on ceremony, it is only a small matter!" Not expecting the other party to kneel down, Zhang Xuan shook his head and gestured for the other party to get back up.

"Elder, I do happen to have a Sepulture Flower. It has a maturity of two hundred years. If you have a need for it, feel free to take it away with you..." At this moment, the Eccentric Old Man suddenly recalled the request which Zhang Xuan had come with, so he quickly added.

Zhang Xuan nodded.

With this, his aim for paying a visit to the Eccentric Old Man was achieved.

"It is not difficult to resolve the Green Spittle Poison, but due to the long duration of your affliction, exceeding more than twenty years, the poison has already seeped deep into your bones and organs, making the situation even more tricky. The effectiveness of consuming an ordinary antidote will only be minimal at best. Thus, I am afraid that I might have to resort to some extreme means..." After pondering for a moment, Zhang Xuan said.

"As long as my poison can be cured, I am willing to do anything at all!" The Eccentric Old Man nodded resolutely.

"Good!" Seeing that the other party was mentally prepared, Zhang Xuan nodded with an approving smile. After which, he flicked his wrist, took out a piece of paper and brush, and began writing out a prescription. "I need these medicinal herbs. The higher their maturity, the better it will be!"

The Eccentric Old Man took the paper and glanced at the ingredient. A moment later, he nodded and passed the prescription to the nearby Zhou Xuan, "Prepare these medicinal herbs for me, and I can consider taking you in as my student!"

"Yes!" Hearing those words, Zhou Xuan's eyes lit up.

Not daring to waste any time, he hurriedly rushed out of the room to prepare the stated medicinal herbs.

"Prepare a huge pot. I will be putting the medicinal herbs and boil them... along with you." Zhang Xuan continued.

"Boil them along with me?" The Eccentric Old Man's eyebrows shot up.

Given his cultivation, he wouldn't suffer any severe injuries from coming into contact with scalding water. Nevertheless, it still wasn't a pleasant sensation to be boiled alive.

"Indeed. You have been afflicted with the poison for far too long, and the huge amounts of medicinal herbs you have consumed over the years only serve to further complicate your condition. It is imperative to first boil out those worthless medicinal substances within your body before going ahead with the treatment!" Zhang Xuan explained.

The Eccentric Old Man nodded in realization.

As physician, he was well aware of his own physical condition. The antidotes he had tried out over the past few years could easily fill several baskets, if not a cart.

With so many medicinal substances accruing within his body, they could easily render even the real antidote ineffective.

The purpose of the boiling process was to clear his body from the remaining medicinal substances, thus returning his body back to its original state.

"After the medicinal substances have been boiled out of your body, consume this gourd of medicinal wine... With that, you should be cured of the Green Spittle Poison in your

body!" Flicking his wrist, Zhang Xuan took out a gourd and passed it over to the Eccentric Old Man.

Ordinary antidotes couldn't hope to seep deeply into the Eccentric Old Man's organs and bones to cleanse him of the Green Spittle Poison. Thus, Zhang Xuan had no choice but to resort to his Heaven's Path zhenqi.

But of course, it was still necessary to condition the other party's body to its best state beforehand, or else he would require a colossal amount of zhenqi.

After all, a lethal poison that was capable of killing a Saint 4-dan expert wasn't something that could be easily resolved with just a surge of two of zhenqi.

"Thank you!" With gratitude gleaming in his eyes, the Eccentric Old Man took the gourd.

An antidote that could cure a grade-7 poison was surely worth far more than a Sepulture Flower, and yet, the other party actually gave it to him without any hesitation.

"Elder, wait here for a moment. I will take the Sepulture Flower over right now..." After learning the treatment method, the Eccentric Old Man immediately rushed out of the room, and not too long later, he returned with a jade box in his hands.

Taking the jade box over, Zhang Xuan pried it open lightly and saw a pure white medicinal herb lying inside, reminiscent of a beautiful jade. It exuded a light fragrance which tickled one's nose.

"Un." With a slight nod, Zhang Xuan passed the Sepulture Flower over to Hu Yunsheng and instructed, "Return to Inkcloud Quarter and prepare for its auctioning. I want the news that this medicinal herb was going to be auctioned to be known by the entire city..."

"Yes!" Hu Yunsheng nodded before leaving with the medicinal herb in hand.

After which, Zhang Xuan closed his eyes and waited patiently.

...

Two hours later.

Zhou Xuan finally returned with the medicinal herbs required. Zhang Xuan swiftly arranged for them to be added into a huge pot to be boiled.

When he gauged that the medicinal properties of the medicinal herbs had finally seeped sufficiently into the boiling water, he gestured for the Eccentric Old Man to go into the pot.

Tzzzzzzzzzz!

Before long, countless dark substances started emerging from the Eccentric Old Man's pores, dyeing the clear water in the pot ink-black.

Zhang Xuan stepped forward and tapped his finger on several points of the other party's body. After which, he flicked his wrist and took out a bundle of needles. With a swift jerk of his hand, the needles flew out and pierced precise locations over the other party's body.

Some time later, after when the water in the pot had been switched several times, the Eccentric Old Man's skin was finally rid of its grayish hue, returning to the original white complexion it had. Knowing that the first step of the treatment was done, Zhang Xuan indicated for the Eccentric Old Man to drink the wine in the gourd.

Not too long later, the grayish color in his eyes also began to disappear.

Hong long long!

By the time the crimson line disappeared, the Eccentric Old Man's body finally slackened. In that instant, a powerful aura burst into the sky, and his initial Saint 1-dan cultivation abruptly surged at an inconceivable speed.

"This..." Zhou Xuan widened his eyes in disbelief.

Noticing the incomprehension in Zhou Xuan's eyes, Zhang Xuan explained with a smile, "The lethal poison in his body had suppressed his cultivation previously. Now that the poison is cured, naturally, he will be able to revert back to his true strength!"

The reason why he was able to notice the Eccentric Old Man's poison was naturally due to the latter executing a battle technique, thus compiling a corresponding book in the Library of Heaven's Path.

The book had introduced the problems which the Eccentric Old Man was facing, but at the same time, it had also stated the other party's identity... Qingyuan Empire, 7-star pinnacle physician!

How could a 7-star pinnacle physician possibly only possess a cultivation of Saint 1-dan?

Most likely, the Eccentric Old Man must have been poisoned by someone, but by some stroke of luck, he managed to survive the initial attempt on his life. However, with his body severely weakened by the effects of the poison, he was left with no choice but to lie low in a remote location! As years went by, the relentless assault of the poison gradually suppressed his cultivation, resulting in his current state.

With the lethal poison resolved, his cultivation was no longer suppressed, thus reverting back to its original level.

Boom!

Tremendous energy was building within the Eccentric Old Man, and before long, he surpassed his Saint 1-dan bottleneck and reached Saint 2-dan Spiritual Perception realm!

Shortly after, Saint 3-dan Embryonic Soul realm!

Two hours later, with a huge burst of energy, Saint 4-dan Primordial Spirit realm!

With his poison resolved, his cultivation finally returned back to its peak.

"I..." Standing up, the Eccentric Old Man felt the strength coursing through his veins, and his eyes couldn't help but redden.

How many years had it been?

For how long had he wished that he would be able to rid himself of his affliction and return back to his peak? Too much time had gone by, and his initial hopes were extinguished. He had already resigned himself to living his life quietly in this remote land. Who could have thought that a middle-aged man would abruptly enter his life and resolve his affliction for him?

"Thank you for granting me a new life, elder!" The Eccentric Old Man immediately got

to his knees and thanked Zhang Xuan earnestly.

He had kneeled earlier as well, but it was out of his overwhelming desire to be treated. This time, however, it was out of earnest respect and gratitude towards his savior.

"You are welcome." Zhang Xuan nodded.

The Eccentric Old Man was a physician, a man who had spent his life saving others from their anguish and sufferings. If it was within his means to do so, it was only right for him to save the other party.

"The person who has poisoned you must be a poison master, right?" Zhang Xuan asked with a frown.

The Green Spittle Poison was something which even 7-star poison masters would struggle to concoct. It was unlikely that anyone other than a poison master would wield such poison on him.

"It is indeed the doing of a poison master. However... with my cultivation recovered, I will have him pay the price of his actions..." With a cold glint in his eyes, the Eccentric Old Man clenched his fists tightly.

"Un." Seeing that the other party was unwilling to speak any more on the matter, Zhang Xuan chose not to delve deeper into the matter either.

"May I know how I should address elder?" the Eccentric Old Man asked.

A life debt had to be repaid. Yet, he didn't even know the other party's name even at this point in time. It was indeed embarrassing.

"My name is Sun Qiang." Zhang Xuan said.

"I see, so it's Elder Sun..." Nodding, the Eccentric Old Man flicked his wrist, took out a token, and handed it over to Zhang Xuan respectfully. "I happen to have some influence in the Qingyuan Empire Physician Guild, so if you were to face any trouble, do make sure to look for me with this token in hand. As long as it is within my means, I will make sure to accomplish it for you..."

"Alright." Taking the token, Zhang Xuan nodded.

He would eventually have to head to Qingyuan Empire one day, and since the other party was willing to do him this favor, it would be fine to accept it. After all, there was no saying that there could be a day that he might need it.

"Since your poison has been cured, I will take my leave now. Farewell!"

Zhang Xuan felt that there was no reason for him to remain since the other party's poison had been cured, so he made his way out and headed to Inkcloud Quarter.

Not too long later, before he could enter Inkcloud Quarter, he already saw Hu Yunsheng rushing out with a livid face. The latter also saw him and immediately rushed up to him while exclaiming, "Elder, bad news..."

Chapter 984

City Lord

"What's wrong?" Seeing the anxious look on Hu Yunsheng's face, Zhang Xuan frowned.

As the boss of a powerful organization, as well as a Saint 1-dan expert, there was no way the other party would panic over minor affairs.

"I had my men spread the news regarding the auctioning of the Sepulture Flower across the city as soon as I returned to Inkcloud Quarter... However, an hour later, a group of men came and insisted on purchasing the Sepulture Flower ahead of the auction." Hu Yunsheng explained with a livid look. "Judging from how forceful they were acting, it seems like they are intending to force a trade."

"Force a trade? Is the other party a poison master?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

Weren't poison masters the only ones who would be attracted by the Sepulture Flower? Was there some other use to it that he wasn't aware of?

"They aren't." Hu Yunsheng shook his head affirmatively.

"How can you be that certain?" Zhang Xuan was surprised by the other party's firm response.

After all, it should be impossible to identify a poison master when he wasn't using poison. As such, it was possible for anyone to be a poison master.

Given so, on what grounds could Hu Yunsheng be so confident that the group of men who insisted on purchasing the Sepulture Flower weren't poison masters?

"This is because I know those guys who came over!" Hu Yunsheng replied. "They are City Lord Hong Jin of Jingyuan City and his guards!"

"The city lord? What does he need the Sepulture Flower for?" Zhang Xuan was perplexed.

The Sepulture Flower was needed by the poison masters to concoct poison, but why would a city lord require such an item? Not to mention, to go to the extent of forcing a trade for it...

"I tried to sound him out, but he isn't speaking a word about it, so I am not too sure either. I have already told him that the item belongs not to Inkcloud Quarter but to you, and he is insisting on meeting you to negotiate now..." Hu Yunsheng said.

"Bring me over." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Regardless of why the other party needed the Sepulture Flower, this matter should indeed be resolved. Since the other party had requested to meet him, there was no reason for him to turn him down.

Under Hu Yunsheng's lead, he soon arrived at a relatively spacious room.

An authoritative-looking middle-aged man sat majestically on the main seat in the room, exuding an air of superiority.

Behind him were several armored guards which carried a powerful aura. They were all Transcendent Mortal 9-dan Chrysalis realm cultivators.

"City Lord Hong, this is the owner of the Sepulture Flower, Elder Sun Qiang!" Walking up, Hu Yunsheng clasped his fist and introduced.

The middle-aged man shot a glance at Zhang Xuan, and upon seeing that the other party was a mere Nascent Saint cultivator, he chuckled softly and said, "This friend over here, I wish to buy your Sepulture Flower. Give me a price!"

Zhang Xuan was a little surprised by how direct the other party was. With a wry smile on his face, he asked, "What price can you offer me?"

"A Sepulture Flower with a maturity of a hundred years is usually worth 80 high-tier spirit stones. Since yours has a maturity slightly higher than that, I will give you a hundred and throw in a Spirit high-tier weapon on top of that!" the middle-aged man said.

Hearing the offer, Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up, "Don't you think your offer is a little low?"

Putting aside the rarity of the Sepulture Flower, even the price at which Hu Yunsheng purchased his Sepulture Flower at back then was higher than the offer that this city lord was giving. The other party was indeed trying to force a trade here.

"Audacious! It is your honor for our esteemed city lord to be interested in your item, you better know your place!" a guard standing behind the middle-aged man bellowed loudly.

"A hundred high-tier spirit stones and a Spirit high-tier weapon is the best price you will get for your Sepulture Flower. Even if you were to go through the auction, it is unlikely that you will be able to get anything higher. Furthermore, it is unsafe to keep such a valuable artifact with you. Listen to my advice and sell it." the second guard said.

The devil and the angel; a threat and an advice... Ultimately, this was nothing more than a mere ploy for him to hand over his medicinal herbs obediently.

Seeing through what the other party was playing at, Zhang Xuan burst into laughter and shook his head before saying, "Ten thousand high-tier spirit stones, and I will sell it to you straight!"

"What did you say?" The eyebrows of the middle-aged man shot up.

His offer was one hundred, yet the other party's offer was ten thousand. That was a blatant disregard for his standing as the city lord!

"Insolence! How dare you..."

The first guard bellowed once more, but before he could finish his words, Zhang Xuan's voice had already sounded once more.

"Twenty thousand!"

"Are you certain that you want to do this? I am only saying this out of concern for you, but..." the second guard said with a frown.

"Thirty thousand!" Zhang Xuan declared.

"You..." The middle-aged man's face reddened as his eyebrows knitted together tightly. In this moment, it felt as if his rage would burst forth at any moment.

The other party clearly had no intentions of selling the Sepulture Flower to him, and from the looks of it, the other party also didn't care who he was either.

"Friend, allow me to give you a word of advice. You are in Jingyuan City at this very moment. Regardless of who you are, you would do well to carry yourself humbly. Otherwise, you won't know what kind of trouble you will be bringing to yourself!" the middle-aged man harrumphed coldly with narrowed eyes.

"Fifty thousand!" Zhang Xuan waved his hands nonchalantly and continued, unbothered by the threats the other party was making.

Trying to throw your weight before me? Hah, heaven knows which sandpit you were kneading mud in when I was out posturing in the world!

"Hmph, let's go!" Seeing how the owner of the Sepulture Flower wasn't willing to budge at all, the middle-aged man harrumphed coldly before walking out of the room.

The moment he stepped out of the room, his face immediately turned livid with rage.

"City lord, shall we dispatch our men to snatch the Sepulture Flower over?" The first guard glanced at the room behind him coldly as he subtly pulled his thumb horizontally before his throat—a gesture to kill.

"There is no need for that. I do need the Sepulture Flower, but since that fellow is going to auction it, there's no harm in going through the official process." A glint appeared in the middle-aged man's narrowed eyes. "I don't believe that there would be anyone in Jingyuan City who will dare bid against me!"

"Indeed!" The eyes of the two guards lit up.

Living in Jingyuan City, who would be so foolish to offend the city lord over a mere flower?

As long as no one dared to bid against him, he could easily take down the flower at any price he wanted. By then, that fellow would be deeply regretting not selling the Sepulture Flower to him for a hundred high-tier spirit stones!

"Let's go!"

The city lord said before walking away with widened strides.

...

"Elder, aren't you being a little reckless offending the city lord like that?" Hu Yunsheng asked with a conflicted look on his face.

"It's fine. It is one thing if he doesn't pull anything, but if he does, I don't mind replacing him with someone else!" Zhang Xuan replied nonchalantly.

With the influence and power he wielded at the moment, there was no need for him to lie low anymore. If the city lord knew what was good for him, he would do well to drop whatever malicious thought he had in mind. Otherwise, he didn't mind teaching the other party a lesson.

As long as he gave Yu Shenqing a heads up, there was no one who would dare object to him changing a city lord or two. Or if it were to come down to it, he could even dispatch a few master teachers down to investigate this Jingyuan City Lord. A person who would force a trade on others was bound to have committed plenty of atrocious deed during his rule. With those misdeeds the other party had done in the past, he could indict the other party and have him severely punished for his crimes.

"Alright then..." Hu Yunsheng was still a little skeptical, but recalling the incredible prowess that the elder before him had displayed earlier in the Eccentric Old Man's residence, he decided not to think too much into the matter. A short moment later, he continued, "I think there is a chance that the city lord might engage in bid rigging by scaring off the other bidders. If that were to happen, it might prove to be a little troublesome."

"Scaring off other bidders?"

"Un. Given his standing and influence, he could easily demand others not to compete with him in the bidding of the Sepulture Flower. If so, I fear that the poison masters might be dissuaded from participating in the auction as well!" Hu Yunsheng replied.

Inkcloud Quarter conducted auctions regularly, so he was rather familiar with the various ploys that bidders could use to undermine the auction system.

It wasn't rare for those who wielded great authority and power to use their standing to force the other bidders to remain silent, thus obtaining the item at a discounted price.

Despite having met with this situation several times, Hu Yunsheng was still unable to find any good solution to the problem.

"This is simple. Plant a person in the midst of the auction, and as long as that fellow dares to raise the price, have your man double the current price. It's my item anyway, so it doesn't matter even if the price hikes up to a million high-tier spirit stones." Zhang Xuan replied.

"This..." Hu Yunsheng blinked his eyes in shock.

To actually hike up the price of your own item, isn't it a little too shameless to do that...

However, thinking about it, that was indeed a good idea to this situation.

This idea was cheap, but that was precisely what they needed to choke the other party with anger and frustration!

"Alright, go and make preparations. As long as I can uncover the location of the Poison Hall, I will resolve your poison." Zhang Xuan said.

"Yes!" Hu Yunsheng nodded before taking his leave.

Shortly after he left, Zhang Xuan's body jolted slightly before vanishing on the spot. In the next moment, he appeared in the Myriad Anthive Nest.

At this moment, the Anthive Nest had already been fully expanded. It had a length of five hundred meters from one end to the other, an incredibly vast space, and there were all sorts of buildings here and there, reminiscent of a massive village.

"Master!" Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, the many tamed beasts within the Anthive Nest hurried forward and greeted him.

Living within the Anthive Nest were the Byzantium Helios Beast and the nine kings of the Cloudmist Ridge. With this powerful force, he could easily wipe the remote Jingyuan City off the map without lifting a finger.

"Cultivate hard. If I have time, I will come in to resolve the problems you face in your cultivation." Nodding at the various beasts, Zhang Xuan said.

These saint beasts were a strong fighting force for him. As such, after placing them in

the Anthive Nest, he had been lecturing them whenever he had time. Over the past two to three months, they had made significant advancement in their fighting prowess.

Were it not for the inability of saint beasts to practice cultivation techniques, these fellows should have advanced their cultivation to an incredible level by now.

After instructing the saint beasts to work hard in their training, Zhang Xuan headed towards a certain room.

Within the room, Wei Ruyan lay peacefully with her eyes closed on a clean bed.

As the goal of finding the Poison Hall was to resolve the poison aura in her body, naturally, Zhang Xuan had been bringing her around through the Anthive Nest.

He placed his hand on the girl's pulse, and a moment later, he heaved a sigh of relief.

"It seems like she still can hold on for some time..."

He hadn't found any good way to resolve Wei Ruyan's dangerous accumulation of poison aura, but through his means, he was still able to alleviate her situation temporarily and stabilize her condition.

She was unlikely to wake up until her affliction was resolved, but at the very least, there was no threat on her life for the time being.

"This lass sure is pitiful..." Zhang Xuan sighed deeply and shook his head.

From her birth, she was tortured by her illness, putting her in great misery. It wasn't easy for her to grow to adulthood, but by the time she realized it, she had lost her closest kin, her father.

It was no wonder why others called the Innate Poison Body Constitution of Disaster. It brought disaster not only to others but even to the person herself as well, depriving her of even a single day that was devoid of pain and suffering.

After confirming that Wei Ruyan's condition was still stable for the moment, Zhang Xuan headed to the specially-built training grounds and sat down there.

It had been more than ten days since he had reached Nascent Saint pinnacle, and while

he hadn't obtained the artifact required for his breakthrough to Saint 1-dan, he hadn't been slacking on his training either. Every single day, he would make sure to spend some time on furthering his cultivation without fail.

Under his persistent hard work, his zhenqi was getting more and more purer and condensed.

Ever since reaching Half-Saint, he could feel that it was getting more and more difficult to make breakthroughs as compared to from before. In the past, the breakthrough of a realm only took two hours, but now, it was taking a few minutes more than before!

"As expected, cultivating is not as easy as I thought..." Zhang Xuan shook his head and sighed

Cultivation was indeed a path fraught with difficulty. Without diligence and mental resilience, it was impossible to persevere on.

Six hours passed in a flash.

Making a quick calculation, Zhang Xuan deduced that it should be night outside, and the auction should be starting soon. Thus, he backed out of the Anthive Nest.

Shortly after he returned to his room, Hu Yunsheng walked in.

"Elder, the auction will be starting soon..."

"Un."

Nodding, Zhang Xuan followed Hu Yunsheng towards the direction of the auction. However, before they could get to the allocated VIP compartment, he suddenly frowned for a moment before his footsteps came to a complete halt.

Chapter 985

Pummeling Your Teacher

"Elder?" Noticing that Zhang Xuan had stopped his footsteps, Hu Yunsheng asked in surprise.

"You can head on to the compartment first. Do as I have said earlier, make sure to take note of everyone who has bidden for the Sepulture Flower and record their names down. I have some matters to attend to at the moment. Don't worry, I will return quickly." Zhang Xuan instructed.

"Yes!" Not daring to say anymore, Hu Yunsheng quickly nodded before proceeding ahead.

Zhang Xuan's frown didn't alleviate with Hu Yunsheng's departure. On the contrary, it deepened. Turning around, he flitted away.

Shortly after, he arrived at the entrance of the vast auction hall.

The surroundings were filled with huge crowds, presumably here to participate in the auction. Scanning the area, Zhang Xuan's eyes soon stopped on an average-looking middle-aged man.

On the surface, that fellow seemed to be a Saint 1-dan primary stage cultivator who harnessed water attribute zhenqi, an unspectacular character in the greater scheme of things. However, for some reason, his presence left Zhang Xuan feeling a little uneasy.

The same uneasy sensation that he had felt back at the Subterranean Gallery...

"He is... an Otherworldly Demon!" Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes.

Having killed more than two hundred Otherworldly Demons in the Subterranean Gallery, he could vaguely tell how fearsome the person before him was. Despite the other party not exuding any killing intent at the moment, he felt an incredible pressure weighing down on him.

Furthermore, his Principal's Seal was trembling in agitation, seemingly about to leap out at any moment.

Eye of Insight!

Faint green lines appeared in Zhang Xuan's black iris. Taking a look once more, his intuition was spot-on. The other party was indeed an Otherworldly Demons.

It was unknown what technique the other party used, but he was able to seal his immense killing intent entirely beneath a layer of water ripple, making it impossible for even the Saint realm cultivators around him from seeing through his true identity.

Were it not for Zhang Xuan having clashed with a huge number of Otherworldly Demons in the Subterranean Gallery, which granted him a deeper insight into the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, and his possession of the Eye of Insight, there was no way he would have known that the person before him was an Otherworldly Demon.

"I can't see through that fellow's strength..." Zhang Xuan clenched his fists tightly together.

Due to the other party's unique disguising method, most perception methods were unable to work on him. The powerful Eye of Insight was able to see through the other party's true form, but it was unable to determine the other party's cultivation.

But of course, it might also be because the other party's strength was far beyond him.

However, the pressing question at hand was not how powerful that fellow was, but why would an Otherworldly Demon disguise himself as a human in the remote Jingyuan City and appear at the entrance of this auction hall? Did he intend to participate in the auction as well?

Was the Sepulture Flower of value to the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe too?

"I can't allow him to enter the auction hall..." Stroking his lower jaw, Zhang Xuan fell into deep thoughts.

A Saint realm Otherworldly Demon suddenly appearing in a human city, there was bound to be some kind of ploy involved here.

No matter what the other party was up to, he had to foil his plans. For one, he should

hinder the other party from participating in the auction and obtaining what he wanted.

"Just that... how should I do it without alarming others?" Zhang Xuan frowned in frustration.

They were right at the entrance of the auction hall at the moment. Regardless of whether he did it himself or dispatched his puppets to do it for him, it would cause a huge uproar. If things were to go badly, the auction hall might even be torn apart.

Furthermore, if he were to corner the other party too far, the other party might be forced to utilize his means as an Otherworldly Demon to retaliate. If so, the realization that the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe could be lurking within Jingyuan City would cause a huge pandemonium... An army of master teacher could very well be brought into Jingyuan City to investigate the matter, forcing the poison masters to lie low. By then, it would be nigh impossible for him to find any poison master to lead him to the Poison Hall.

While deep in thought, he saw the disguised Otherworldly Demon following the bustling crowd into the auction hall. If he wanted to act, he would have to do it now. Once the other party was settled in the auction hall, it would be impossible to drag the other party out without causing a pandemonium,

"There is no time to plan anymore. I will just have to deal with whatever that comes my way..." Knowing that he didn't have the luxury of time, Zhang Xuan dashed forward and blocked the disguised Otherworldly Demon's path.

"What are you doing?!"

Seeing that someone had suddenly blocked his path, the disguised Otherworldly Demon frowned in displeasure.

Huala!

Following which, the two guards beside the disguised Otherworldly Demon stepped forward and drew their swords, seemingly ready to make a move should Zhang Xuan try anything funny.

These two guards were Chrysalis realm pinnacle experts, but they weren't Otherworldly Demons, just ordinary cultivators.

"May I know why this friend over here is blocking my way?" Seeing that everyone's gaze was drawn towards him, the disguised Otherworldly Demon waved his hands casually, indicating for the guards to step down before turning to Zhang Xuan.

The disguised Otherworldly Demon knew that it was not to his advantage to draw attention towards himself. After all, it was more likely for his true identity to be exposed should he be placed under the spotlight.

Moreover, disguised as a human in Jingyuan City, he had a mission to accomplish as well. It wouldn't do to draw too many eyes upon himself at this moment.

"The heaven isn't blind after all! After so many years, it has finally brought me to you!" Paying no heed the disguised Otherworldly Demon's words, a look of extreme agitation suddenly surfaced on Zhang Xuan's face as he rushed forward to hug the other party.

Frowning, the Otherworldly Demon raised his palm and pushed Zhang Xuan away.

"I am Sun Qiang! Don't you recognize me?"

Being pushed away, Zhang Xuan looked at the disguised Otherworldly Demon anxiously and quickly introduced himself, as if worried that his old friend didn't recognize him.

"Sun... Qiang?" The disguised Otherworldly Demon frowned. "I'm sorry. You must have gotten the wrong person!"

As an Otherworldly Demon infiltrating the Master Teacher Continent, how could he possibly have any acquaintances here? Just where in this world did this fool pop out from?

"There is no way I could have gotten the wrong person!" Ignoring the other party's cold attitude, Zhang Xuan grabbed the other party arm in agitation and said, "We have grown up together, and I can still remember how arrogant you were when you were younger. Back then, after you managed to achieve a huge breakthrough in your cultivation, you viciously pummeled our teacher because you thought he was too nosey. In order to avenge your pet, you specially concocted a poison and killed a Saint realm expert. On top of that, you also studied the arts of the soul oracle and used your soul to conduct quite a few misdeeds. These memories are still very fresh in my mind, as if they had only happened yesterday. There is no way I can ever mistake you for

another person!"

"He pummeled his own teacher because he thought his teacher was too noseey? How can a person treat his teacher like that?"

"Concocting poison to kill a Saint realm expert... He is a poison master?"

"He learned the arts of the soul oracle? Didn't the soul oracles betray humanity for the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe back then?"

Hearing those words, the gazes from the crowd started to turn hostile.

Those of the Master Teacher Continent were taught to respect their teacher and lineage from young. A person who betrayed his own teacher and lineage would be scorned by others for his entire life.

More important, poison masters and soul oracles were occupations that were scorned in the continent. It could already be said that it was very patient of them to not rush forward and pummel that person before them.

"What nonsense are you spouting?" Seeing how a person he didn't recognize suddenly uttering such nonsense here, the eyebrows of the Otherworldly Demon shot up, and he nearly erupted on the spot, "I don't even know you!"

If the crowd were to turn against him over this matter and his true identity was revealed in the process, how was he going to accomplish his mission?

Thus, he jerked his arm forcefully, knocking away the hand that was grasping him.

'You don't know me? Very well!' As if displeased by the other party's action of feigning ignorance, Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up, "Three years ago, when you were being pursued by your enemies and was on the verge of death, I was the one who saved you. If I remember correctly, your enemies managed to impale your left shoulder back then, and the wound should have left a scar. Since you said that you don't know me, do you dare to show your left shoulder to all of us right here to prove that I was lying?"

"You..." The disguised Otherworldly Demon was stunned for a moment before clenching his fists tightly in frustration.

His left shoulder had indeed been impaled by a special weapon three years ago. To

this day, he still had yet to recover from it fully, and the wound had also left a permanent scar on his left shoulder. Due to the unique nature of the injury, he wasn't able to conceal it even when disguising as a human...

As his wound had been concealed within his clothes all along, and he had never shown it to anyone before, not even his closest friend was aware of this matter. Where in the world did that fellow learn of this matter?

"Why? You dare not show your shoulder right here? Well, of course you don't! Your injury was caused by a spear imbued with the fire attribute whereas the cultivation technique you practice is of the water attribute. As such, that wound has resulted in a permanent scar which you can't erase! On top of that, the encounter has also left a hidden trauma in your body. A surge of flame zhenqi will relentlessly strike your Hunyin acupoint every full moon, leaving you in great agony... How is it? Is there any mistake in what I have said?" Zhang Xuan continued.

"Y-you..." The disguised Otherworldly Demon was only astonished when the other party spoke about the scar on his left shoulder, but at this moment, he felt so crazed that his eyes were on the verge of popping from their sockets.

The other party's description was spot-on.

The scar on his left shoulder was indeed caused by a spear imbued with the fire attribute, and it was also true that he cultivated a water attribute cultivation technique. The matter about there being a surge of flame zhenqi in his body torturing him every month was also correct... There was no mistake in the other party's account at all!

But he was certain that he didn't know the other party, and even if he did, he had never told anyone of the problems he was facing either...

So how did this fellow find out?

"You still don't remember me? Are you hiding something that makes it inconvenient for you to reveal your identity? Is that the reason why you are hiding from me?" Zhang Xuan continued.

"Cough cough! Brother Sun Qiang, I finally recognize you now!"

As that person spoke on, the gazes directed towards him was becoming more and

more peculiar. Fearing that his identity might just be dredged up should the other party continue speaking, the disguised Otherworldly Demon could only concede with a look of awkwardness.

"That's more like it! I knew that I couldn't have possibly mistaken you for anyone else! Here, this is the fine wine that you savor the most. If you still regard me as your brother, drink it!" Seeing the other party bending under the pressure from the surroundings, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. With a smiling face, he flicked his wrist, took out a gourd, and passed it over.

"You want me to drink? Right here?" The disguised Otherworldly Demon was flabbergasted.

What is with the sudden jump in logic? Even if we are good friends, surely there is a time and place to drink!

We are right outside the auction hall, and there are so many people looking... You want me to drink right here?

He wasn't the only one perplexed by Zhang Xuan's abrupt words. The crowd was also baffled as well.

"Why? You don't trust me? You think that there is a problem with the wine I am giving you? Sigh, you really should work on that skeptical personality of yours. Fine, I will drink first!" Shaking his head with a smile, Zhang Xuan uncorked the wine gourd, and an intoxicating fragrance drifted into the surroundings. Tilting his head upwards, he took a hearty gulp of the wine.

After he was done, he passed it over to the disguised Otherworldly Demon, "Here you go!"

"I think it will be better for us to drink another day. The auction is about to start, and I still have matters to attend to..."

A stranger he didn't know was abruptly offering him wine out of nowhere. He would be lying if he said he wasn't doubtful.

"That skeptical personality like yours sure is like the Otherworldly Demons, especially like that Qingtian something Waterleaf King..." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

Geji!

As soon as the disguised Otherworldly Demon heard those words, his entire body stiffened. A hint of killing intent flashed across his eyes.

It might seem as if the other party was uttering nonsense, but the other party had managed to identify him accurately!

In other words, all of those that were spoken before was not a coincidence at all. The other party... knew who he was!

Just that... he pondered for a while, but there was no one named Sun Qiang that he knew of.

"You're right! Good friends should indeed have a drink together. However, this isn't the place to do so. Why don't we go to a tavern together and drink our hearts out?" Suppressing his killing intent, the disguised Otherworldly Demon chuckled amiably.

In any case, if his identity was already compromised, there was only one thing that he could do... Find an opportunity to kill the other party!

Otherwise, if he were to be exposed right here, he would be unable to accomplish his mission.

"You want to drink together at a tavern? Sure. However, you have to drink my wine first before I will go with you. If you aren't even willing to reciprocate this kind gesture of mine, who knows whether you will be bringing me to drink or to the netherworld later on? A person who has beat up his teacher surely has no qualms about killing his close friends too, right?" Zhang Xuan said with a wry smile.

"You..."

The disguised Otherworldly Demon's face reddened.

Chapter 986

Waterleaf King

One thing he could be sure at this moment was that the other party had already uncovered his identity.

But... his disguise should have been flawless! How could someone possibly see through it?

Could it be that the other party possessed a cultivation more fearsome than him?

"Of course not! If a sip of wine can allay your fears, I am more than willing to do so." With a light smile, the disguised Otherworldly Demon swiftly concealed his loss of composure a moment ago.

Taking the gourd from Zhang Xuan's hands, he began assessing the wine carefully with narrowed eyes.

For the other party to offer him a gourd of wine after uncovering his true identity, it was hard to believe that there was nothing wrong with the wine.

Activating his Spiritual Perception, he swiftly swept through the contents of the wine, and the result left a deep frown on his forehead.

The conclusion he received was that the gourd was filled with nothing more than ordinary wine. If there was anything peculiar about it, it was just that it was richly infused with spiritual energy.

The disguised Waterleaf King hesitated for a moment, and eventually, he still felt that it was better to be safe than sorry. Thus, he passed the gourd back to Zhang Xuan, took out a jade bottle, and said, "I'm afraid that I don't fancy the wine you brought too much. Let's drink mine instead."

This bottle of wine was his personal possession, so he could be confident that there was nothing wrong with it.

Lifting up the jade bottle, the disguised Otherworldly Demon was just about to uncork the cap and take a drink when Zhang Xuan suddenly stepped forward to grab the bottle, "You don't like the wine I brought you? Let me take a look at what you have in here then."

After saying those words, Zhang Xuan uncorked the cap.

The rich aroma of alcohol burst forth from the bottle. It was indeed far better than the wine he had in the gourd earlier.

"Fine wine indeed! It is no wonder you aren't interested in the one I have. Here!" Zhang Xuan took a swift glance at it before passing it back, not making any peculiar actions at all.

"Un." Taking everything into sight, the disguised Otherworldly Demon heaved a sigh of relief when he confirmed that the other party hadn't done anything to the wine in the bottle. He took the bottle back from Zhang Xuan's hand and took a sip from it.

"Alright, shall we head to a tavern together and drink our hearts away?" the disguised Otherworldly Demon said with a smile.

"Of course!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

"Lord..." Seeing that the esteemed guest which they were supposed to be escorting leaving the area to drink with someone else, the two guards standing beside the disguised Otherworldly Demon glanced at one another in confusion.

Isn't he here to participate in the auction? Why is he leaving before the auction has even started?

"The both of you can head in first. I will return swiftly." The disguised Otherworldly Demon waved his hand nonchalantly.

"Yes!" Seeing that the other party had already made up his mind, the guards hesitated for a moment before nodding.

Even their master had to obey the commands of the man before them, so naturally, they dared not to go against the other party's orders either.

"Let's go!" Seeing that the other party was done, Zhang Xuan took the lead, and before

long, they were out of Inkcloud Quarter.

Walking along the streets, they soon arrived at a remote alley.

Seeing that there was no one around, the Otherworldly Demon couldn't hold himself back any longer. Rushing forward to block Zhang Xuan's path, he asked with a cold glint in his eyes, "Who in the world are you?"

"Me? I am just an ordinary human. On the other hand... for an Otherworldly Demon like you to be walking in public disguised as a human, you sure are brazen!"

At which, Zhang Xuan's lips curled up, "Isn't that so, Waterleaf King?"

"Y-you... Just who are you?"

The disguised Otherworldly Demon raised his palm and closed it, and a torrent of zhenqi sealed the space in the surroundings. A powerful surge of killing intent burst into the area, and all a sudden, the entire street seemed to have turned into a living hell.

From the moment he realized that the other party had uncovered his true identity, he had already decided to kill the other party.

"Who am I?" Zhang Xuan shook his head. "You aren't qualified to know who I am!"

"Unwilling to speak? Fine by me too. I have no interest in learning a dead man's name either!" The Waterleaf King roared furiously as his claws swiped at Zhang Xuan with frightening swiftness.

Huala!

A burst of devastating zhenqi rose up like waves of the ocean. Under the tremendous might of the Waterleaf King, the streets creaked wildly, ready to collapse at any moment.

From the great strength that the Waterleaf King was able to harness, Zhang Xuan could tell that he was not at Saint 1-dan or 2-dan, but... 4-dan!

Primordial Spirit realm!

"You want to kill me?" Zhang Xuan stood calmly in face of the other party's attack, not surprised at all. Instead, he chuckled softly and said, "I am afraid that you don't have the ability to do so... Lie down!"

Just like what he did back at Inkcloud Quarter, he snapped his fingers as he said those words.

Padah!

In the next moment, the powerful Waterleaf King's body abruptly stiffened before crashing forcefully into the ground. The immense might he had commanded a moment ago vanished like the receding tide. Lying on the floor, he coughed huge mouthfuls of blood.

"Y-you... poisoned me?" In the narrowed eyes of the Waterleaf King, his disbelief was apparent.

He had made sure to proceed warily, opting not to consume the other party's wine even after confirming that it hadn't been spiked. Yet, despite all of the preventive measures he had done, he still ended up being poisoned!

"Of course! How can I deal with a powerful King like you without resorting to certain means?" Zhang Xuan said with a smile.

Through his Eye of insight, he could only see that the other party was an Otherworldly Demon. He only managed to confirm the other party's identity through his Library of Heaven's Path.

His first gesture to hug the other party had forced the other party to drive his zhenqi to knock him away, and that had allowed him to compile a book on the other party in the Library of Heaven's Path.

To his astonishment, the disguised Otherworldly Demon was actually an Otherworldly Demon King like the Goldenleaf King and Greenleaf King whom he killed at the Subterranean Gallery previously... Waterleaf King!

A powerful Saint 4-dan expert!

For a powerful King like the other party to actually be hidden amongst the human populace... If he didn't stop the other party, it could very well end in a disaster!

Even the utter destruction of Jingyuan City was possible!

Even with Zhang Xuan's current strength, it was unlikely that he would be able to fare well against the Waterleaf King. Relying on his Otherworldly Demon puppets was a plausible option, but even if he was able to kill the other party through such a mean, it would still stir up a huge commotion which would hinder his goal of finding a poison master. To be safe, he chose to lure the other party to drinking his wine instead.

Hidden within the wine was his Heaven's Path zhenqi. With just a single thought from him, it could be instantaneously turned into lethal poison.

The Waterleaf King was indeed smart, adamantly choosing not to drink his wine. However, even a person as wary as the other party couldn't have imagined that he would be able to poison the wine just by touching the jade bottle.

Due to the incredible purity of the Heaven's Path zhenqi, it was able to seep through the miniature pores in the jade bottle. In the moment that Zhang Xuan took the jade bottle, he discreetly infused a few surges of Heaven's Path zhenqi into the wine. Furthermore, the Heaven's Path zhenqi would only appear as ordinary spiritual energy when scanned through Spiritual Perception.

But of course, the main reason why he was able to get the Waterleaf King to put his guard down was because it was inconceivable!

Even the most formidable of poison masters would have to use poison powder, gu insects, or something of that sort in order to poison another. For one's zhenqi to actually harness lethal poison... that was unthinkable!

"You... I will bring you down with me!" Seeing the other party admit to it, the Waterleaf King's face turned red. With a furious roar, he smacked his palm against the ground to push his body up and charged right towards Zhang Xuan.

But before he could strike, Zhang Xuan uttered, "Down!"

Boom!

With a snap of the fingers, the Waterleaf King fell vertically from the sky and landed heavily on the ground. Cold sweat trickled from his forehead.

At this point, the Heaven's Path zhenqi had already infiltrated all of the acupoints and

organs of the Waterleaf King's body. With just a thought, Zhang Xuan would be able to kill him instantaneously. In terms of lethality, not even grade-7 poison could compare to it. As powerful as the Waterleaf King was, he was also completely helpless before it.

"What kind of poison is this?" Realizing that something was amiss, the Waterleaf King widened his eyes in horror.

In order to ensure the success of his mission, he had made sure to consume many antidotes beforehand so as to render them ineffective against him. Typically speaking, ordinary poisons should be completely ineffective on him.

It was one thing for him to have not noticed when he was poisoned, but to be unable to feel the poison when it was already in his body... that was really a little frightening.

Could it be that he had already been poisoned by a 7-star poison master even before the start of his mission?

But wasn't the most capable poison master in the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall only at 6-star?

Not responding to the other party's question, Zhang Xuan stepped forward and tapped on the other party's body several times, sealing his cultivation.

He had already found the other party's weaknesses through the Library of Heaven's Path, and his Heaven's Path zhenqi had curbed the other party's movements. Thus, subduing the other party wasn't particularly difficult.

After sealing the Waterleaf King's cultivation, Zhang Xuan glanced at the other party's mouth and abruptly closed his hand. In the next moment, a small pill flew out from the other party's mouth, and he caught it with a wax paper.

"You..." Seeing the other party retrieving the pill from his mouth, the Waterleaf King's face warped in astonishment.

The pill was a final resort were he to captured by an enemy so as to prevent any secrets from leaking out.

Other than the other Otherworldly Demon Kings who were carrying out similar missions as well, no one was aware of the existence of the pill... Just who was the person before him?!

It was one thing to know his name, but how could the other party be aware of such a confidential secret as well?

"You should know what to do now!" After destroying the poisonous pill in the wax paper, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze back to the Waterleaf King.

The Goldenleaf King and Greenleaf King had committed suicide through that pill after he subdued them the previous time around. Unwilling to allow history to repeat itself, he was prepared this time around.

"Speak! What is your purpose at Jingyuan City?" Zhang Xuan questioned grimly.

"You want me to betray my tribesmen? Dream on!" The Waterleaf King gritted his teeth.

"Refusing to budge? I see..." Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up. He placed his finger on the other party's body and began sending a surge of zhenqi into the other party's body.

Tzzzzzzzzzzzzzz!

As soon as the zhenqi entered the Waterleaf King's body, he immediately felt as if his entire body had been bitten by thousands and thousands of poisonous bugs, evoking an unbearable sharp pain throughout his body.

If the pain had just been limited to his body, it would still have been tolerable for him. However, that surge of zhenqi which the other party infused into his body seemed to exert an overwhelming pressure on his soul as well, threatening to rip his soul apart.

"You want me to submit to a lower lifeform like you? Impossible!" Clenching his jaws tightly to bear with the pain, the Waterleaf King roared furiously.

In the next moment, his body abruptly bloated up with an inflated balloon.

"What?" Upon seeing the other party's state, Zhang Xuan's face warped in shock.

He quickly hastened the infusion of zhenqi, intending to suppress whatever the other party was about to do. However, in the next second, the other party's body abruptly began withering at a visible pace. Following which, a soul which bore the same form as the Waterleaf King flew out from the other party's glabella.

"Is this a soul?"

Feeling the powerful aura emanating from the soul, Zhang Xuan was taken aback for a moment before his eyes narrowed in alarm. "No, it isn't just a soul. It is... a Primordial Spirit!"

At Saint 4-dan Primordial Spirit realm, a cultivator would have tempered his Embryonic Soul into a Primordial Spirit. Similar to the souls of soul oracles, Primordial Spirits were able to exist independently from the body. They could easily cover great distances within a short period of time, and they wielded the power to decapitate another with just a single thought.

The Waterleaf King's physical body and cultivation had been suppressed by his Heaven's Path zhenqi, and in a moment of panic, he decisively abandoned his physical body and charged out in the form as his Primordial Spirit.

However, a cultivator's Primordial Spirit would still be in an unstable form before reaching Saint 5-dan. A forceful separation from the body before then could potentially cause the body to die, and it would be difficult for the unstable Primordial Spirit to survive for extended periods of time alone as well.

"Even at the expense of my life, I will drag you down to the netherworld with me..." Roaring frenziedly, the Waterleaf King charged at Zhang Xuan savagely.

Under the current circumstances, it was unlikely that he would be getting out of here alive. Since that was the case, he could very well use a companion on his trip to the netherworld!

Despite the other party's mysterious means, he was only a Nascent Saint with a weak soul. As long as his Primordial Spirit were to charge into the other party's body, he would be able to tear the other party's soul into shreds easily!

Hu!

Before Zhang Xuan could react, the Waterleaf King's Primordial Spirit had already slipped into his glabella, causing Zhang Xuan's body to freeze altogether.

After entering Zhang Xuan's body, the Waterleaf King was just about to devour the other party's soul when he abruptly saw a mountain-like silhouette before his eyes.

"Hahaha, I shall devour you whole... The heck, what is this?"

The Waterleaf King's eyes widened in astonishment.

Chapter 987

City Lord Manor

With a doubt, an attack from a Primordial Spirit was extremely frightening. It could easily crush or even devour a soul. No matter how powerful one's defense was, it was extremely difficult to guard one's soul.

This was precisely the reason why a Primordial Spirit realm expert was extremely frightening, far beyond that of an Embryonic Soul realm cultivator.

When the Waterleaf King found himself poisoned and had his cultivation sealed, he knew that there was no way he would be getting out of here alive. Thus, he used a secret art to forcefully draw his Primordial Spirit out of his physical body, intending to devour the enemy's soul whole as his final act of valor.

But when he dived into the other party's body and saw the soul within, he nearly died of shock.

The other party's soul was more than ten meters tall, and it commanded an aura of inviolable authority, reminiscent of the will of the heavens. Standing before it, he felt so pressured by the presence that it felt as if his mind would break at any moment.

"How... how could this be possible? How could anyone possibly have such a huge soul?"

The Waterleaf King couldn't help but fly into a hysteria.

An ordinary Nascent Saint cultivator would have cultivated his soul, but it would only be at the elementary level of just being able to wield the power of the heavens. To make a comparison, it should have been nothing more than an infant before his.

But... what the heck was this?

More than ten meters tall, reminiscent of a massive mountain... and more importantly, there wasn't the slightest bit of coldness or yin energy from it. On the contrary, it even carried a radiant tinge of lightning on it. Putting aside devouring that soul, it would be

a huge blessing if he could avoid being devoured by it...

Could it be that... the fellow before him wasn't a Nascent Saint but a Saint 5-dan or even 6-dan expert?

Otherwise, how could he have such a powerful soul?

He had thought that by going all out, he would at least be able to force the other party to pay a heavy price for his actions. Yet, who could have thought that the other party's soul was far stronger than his? There was no way he could match that monstrous thing before him!

Why must reality be so cruel...

"Flee!"

Knowing that it was impossible for him to win, the Waterleaf King turned around and ran away without any hesitation.

But before he could get away, his body suddenly froze. Following which, a massive hand wrapped around his waist, and no matter how he struggled, he couldn't break free from it.

"Soul Search!"

Grabbing the Primordial Spirit before him, Zhang Xuan uttered coldly.

It would have been extremely difficult for him to kill a Primordial Spirit realm expert using normal means had the other party not attempted to infiltrate his body with his Primordial Spirit. However, since the other party had done so, the rest was simple.

Flowing through his body was the incredibly powerful Heaven's Path zhenqi, and on top of that, there was a Library of Heaven's Path sitting within him. Even Vicious was no match for it, so how well could a mere Primordial Spirit possibly fare before it?

In just an instant, the other party was already screaming in agony, as if he had been dropped in a pot of oil.

"Young master, don't kill that fellow. Leave his Primordial Spirit to me, I have a use for it!" Just as Zhang Xuan was about to conduct a Soul Search, Vicious abruptly spoke up.

"Leave his Primordial Spirit to you?"

"Yes. Consuming the Primordial Spirit of an Otherworldly Demon King can help me recover faster..." At which, Vicious hurriedly added, "Don't worry, young master. I will make sure to squeeze every last bit of information that you want to know from him!"

"Alright then." Since Vicious had guaranteed it, Zhang Xuan nodded and passed the Waterleaf King's Primordial Spirit over to him.

Leaving Vicious to be, he returned his consciousness to his physical body.

Exhaling deeply, it was only then did Zhang Xuan realize that he had broken out in cold sweat.

In truth, he was truly in a perilous situation for a moment there. Had the Waterleaf King decided to clash with him directly instead of foolishly slipping into his body in hopes to killing him faster, there was no saying who would be the ultimate victor.

While Zhang Xuan's soul was indeed extremely large, it was still a little off from comparing up to a Primordial Spirit. After all, the difference between the two lay not just in their sizes but their level of existence.

The only reason why Zhang Xuan was able to emerge victorious was due to the overwhelming advantage he wielded in his body.

It seemed like he really had to be a little bit more careful when dealing with Primordial Spirit realm experts in the future.

Glancing at the corpse of the Waterleaf King, Zhang Xuan hooked his finger, and a storage ring flew into his grasp.

Immersing his consciousness within, he saw a huge mountain of treasures within. There must be at least several thousand high-tier spirit stones within the pile.

"Most likely, he is on some kind of mission, just like the Goldenleaf King and Greenleaf King, that's why he has so many high-tier spirit stones on him..." Zhang Xuan thought as his eyes lit up.

Regardless of what the other party's aim was, he had definitely made a killing with this sum of high-tier spirit stones.

He continued browsing through the other items in the storage ring, and there were a handful of secret manuals relating to the soul. However, just like those that the other two Kings had, their content was very bizarre and vague.

Casually flipping through those secret manuals, he found himself unable to make sense out of them. At that moment, a thought suddenly flashed across his mind.

Compile!

Compiling the soul cultivation technique manuals he had obtained from the three Otherworldly Demon Kings, a new book was formed.

He flipped open the new book and began browsing through it.

A moment later, his eyes lit up.

"To think that it works..."

He thought that due to the innate differences between humans and the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, their soul cultivation techniques would be useless towards him. However, after compiling many of them together, he realized that it was still possible to form a perfect Heaven's Path Soul Art through it.

"From the looks of it, even though the soul cultivation techniques of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe differs from that of the humans, they are headed towards the same destination and possesses similar effects..." Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

The original version of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe's soul cultivation techniques was extremely bizarre. Based on his deduction, it was very likely that one could go berserk from cultivating it... However, thinking about it again, it might just be another different school of soul cultivation, one that was vastly different from that of the humans.

There were many different schools to interpreting cultivation, but the ultimate destination was the same.

Compile!

Taking out the Transcendent Mortal 9-dan soul cultivation technique which Mo Hunsheng had given him back then, he compiled it together with the soul cultivation

technique which he had just compiled earlier on.

A moment later, a new book appeared before his eyes.

Taking a look at it, Zhang Xuan's lips curled up.

He had finally perfected the Transcendent Mortal 9-dan Heaven's Path Soul Art!

He had only cultivated his soul up to Transcendent Mortal 8-dan to date, and with this newly compiled Heaven's Path Soul Art, he would be able to advance his soul cultivation to Transcendent Mortal 9-dan, thus advancing his strength further.

"However, this isn't the time for that!" Suppressing his urge to cultivate, Zhang Xuan cleared the corpse of the Waterleaf King before releasing the restraints in the surroundings and headed towards Inkcloud Quarter.

After wasting so much time, the auction was bound to have already begun.

The important matter at hand was to find the trail of the poison masters first.

Right after stepping into the auction, before Zhang Xuan could make sense out of the situation in there, Hu Yunsheng had already rushed up to him.

"Elder, the city lord has left the auction hall just a few moment ago!"

"He left the auction hall?" Zhang Xuan was surprised.

"Yes! Before the auction for the Sepulture Flower began, he suddenly turned around and left his VIP compartment. I thought that he might have some urgent matters to attend to and would be back very soon, but my men reported that he headed right back to the City Lord Manor. It seems like he has no intentions of participating in the auction anymore, but... I can't help but feel that something is amiss." Hu Yunsheng frowned doubtfully.

That fellow was determined to obtain the Sepulture Flower previously, resorting to even forcing a trade with them. Yet, right before the auctioning of the Sepulture Flower, he suddenly turned around and left...

This had left Hu Yunsheng baffled.

Zhang Xuan was also rather perplexed by the situation as well.

There was something really off about this matter.

He had met the city lord for himself, and he could feel the latter's determination in obtaining the Sepulture Flower... The latter had already come to the auction hall, and it was just moments before the auction of the Sepulture Flower. Why would he suddenly give up at this point?

"Could he be planning on snatching the Sepulture Flower?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"It doesn't seem too likely considering that he returned back to his City Lord Manor... My guess is that there might be an abrupt situation that left him no choice but to return!" Hu Yunsheng pondered for a moment before replying.

Zhang Xuan fell into a moment of deep thought before nodding, "I understand. For the time being, you should focus on running the auction and continue keeping a lookout for the poison masters. I will see go and see what is going on with the city lord."

The very fact that the city lord wanted the Sepulture Flower, which should have only been useful to the poison masters, had already rung some warning bells in his head. For the other party to suddenly leave so hurriedly at this moment, there was probably something even deeper to the matter. This was something that deserved looking further into.

"Alright!" Hu Yunsheng nodded. "The City Lord Manor is well-guarded, and it will be dangerous to infiltrate it... Elder, do be careful!"

He wasn't worried about Zhang Xuan's safety, but there would be no one to cure his poison should something happen to the latter.

"Rest assured!" Zhang Xuan waved his hands.

He might not be a match for a Primordial Spirit realm Otherworldly Demon, but those guards of the City Lord Manor could barely be considered a threat to him.

"Un." Recalling that the middle-aged man before him was not only a powerful cultivator but a poison master as well, Hu Yunsheng heaved a sigh of relief and nodded.

After which, he quickly pointed out the direction of the City Lord Manor and explained

its layout to the other party.

As an intelligence agency, it was no surprise for Inkcloud Quarter to have detailed information about the blueprint and security of the City Lord Manor.

Very soon, after Zhang Xuan gained a decent level of understanding regarding the City Lord Manor, he began making his way over.

The City Lord Manor stood at the very heart of Jingyuan City, just a few kilometers away from Inkcloud Quarter. Flying under the cover of the night sky, it didn't take long for a vast manor to come into sight.

Recalling the intelligence which Hu Yunsheng had supplied him earlier, Zhang Xuan activated his Eye of Insight and easily found the openings in the defensive formations and patrols.

"It seems like that fellow's intelligence network is pretty impressive after all!" Zhang Xuan chuckled beneath his breath before making his way in.

It was only due to the extreme secrecy the Poison Hall maintained that Hu Yunsheng was unable to obtain much news regarding it. As for the other matters, Inkcloud Quarter's intelligence network was still of great use.

With the intelligence Zhang Xuan had obtained beforehand, it didn't take long for Zhang Xuan to bypass the defenses of the City Lord Manor and arrive in the vicinity of the main hall, where the city lord resided.

With a nimble leap, he hid himself amidst a huge tree in the courtyard and secretly peeked in.

Following which, he saw the city lord pacing around the vast main hall nervously, seemingly waiting for something.

The two guards that were with him were also standing on high alert, scanning their surroundings seriously.

"The both of you are dismissed for the time being." The city lord waved his hand.

"Yes, my lord!"

The two guards left the main hall, and the room fell silent.

The city lord continued pacing around the room nervously, and a moment later, a unique aura suddenly permeated the room.

Following which, a silhouette abruptly appeared in the room.

"Paying respects to the great lord..."

Upon seeing the silhouette, the city lord heaved a sigh of relief and hurriedly clasped his fist. It seemed like this was the person he was waiting for all this while.

"Un." The silhouette placed his hands behind his back and nodded nonchalantly.

"Lord, the auction for the Sepulture Flower you tasked me to purchase is about to begin..." The city lord said questioningly with a tinge of doubt in his voice.

It was under the other party's orders that he was going to purchase the Sepulture Flower, but just moments before the auctioning of the Sepulture Flower, the other party abruptly summoned him back. He couldn't help but feel a little bewildered by the situation.

"Something has happened..." Instead of responding to the city lord's query, the silhouette said with a deep frown.

"Something has happened?" The city lord repeated uncomprehendingly.

"Un."

The silhouette waved his hand, and just as he was about to speak, his eyebrows suddenly shot up. Turning his gaze in the direction where Zhang Xuan was hidden, he bellowed coldly, "Who is there?"

Chapter 988

Lifebound Venomous Bug

Boom!

Following which, a powerful might fell upon the entire courtyard, including the huge tree which Zhang Xuan was hidden in. Under the rampaging zhenqi, Zhang Xuan felt as if his body would be torn apart.

"The other party has discovered me?" Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes in alarm.

He had made sure to conceal his presence entirely, sealing every trace of aura within his body. Even if one were to scan his area, he would only appear to be a non-living being.

It was also out of confidence for his concealment ability that he chose to come here in his body instead of just his soul. Who could have thought that he would be discovered before he could do anything at all?

Zhang Xuan hesitated for a moment, and just as he was about to show himself, he suddenly heard two powerful gust of wind behind him.

Following which, two figures leaped into the courtyard.

Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. It seemed like the other party wasn't referring to him after all.

Both of the two figures were dressed in dark gray clothes. One of them had a towering physique and a snowy beard. He exuded a powerful aura which hinted at the incredible strength he harnessed.

The other had a relatively small build, but there was a sharp glint in his eyes which made one instinctively realize that he wouldn't be an easy person to deal with.

They were both Saint 1-dan pinnacle experts. The movement technique they used was rather uncommon, or at the very least, Zhang Xuan had never seen such a movement

technique before.

"It's you two?" Upon seeing their appearances, the eyes of the silhouette, which had been talking to the city lord, a moment ago lit up.

"Indeed. And you must be the one who have been using all kinds of means to dig up news on us?" With a hostile gaze, the white-beard elder narrowed his eyes.

They had found that someone had been trying to track them down over the past few days, so they decided to launch a pre-emptive strike first. Following the trails of the culprits, they eventually found themselves at the City Lord Manor. However, they didn't think that they would be discovered shortly after entering the manor.

"Hahaha, I have searched far and wide for you but to no avail, but who could have thought that you will end up knocking on my doorstep instead? Since you are already here, don't even think about leaving anymore!" The silhouette sneered coldly as he spread his palm open and thrust it downward.

Hong long!

In the next moment, the air in the surroundings seemed to be have turned incredibly viscous, and an overwhelming aura crushed down on the entire manor. It seemed like a powerful formation had been activated.

"Shit, it is a trap!" In that instant, the faces of the two men turned livid.

It couldn't be clearer to them at this moment that the other party had intentionally lured them into this manor so as to trap them with the formation.

"Hahaha, you realized it too late!"

With a cold smile, the silhouette lifted his palm and thrust it forward forcefully.

Boom!

A powerful burst of might shot forth towards the taller man, tearing a long gorge of a meter in width along its path.

Jiya, even the formation shook violently before that powerful might, ready to collapse at any moment.

"That silhouette man is a Saint 4-dan expert too?"

On the tree, Zhang Xuan's face turned grim.

To his astonishment, the silhouette man was also a Primordial Spirit realm expert, just like the Waterleaf King.

Even in Qingyuan Conferred Empire, Primordial Spirit realm experts were individuals who stood at the peak of the pyramid. Why would so many of them suddenly appear in a remote location like Jingyuan City?

Flaws!

Seeing that the other party was in the midst of executing his battle technique, Zhang Xuan willed without any hesitation, and a book materialized in the Library of Heaven's Path.

Placing his fingers on the book, he swiftly flipped it open.

"Violetleaf King, one of the Qingtian Ten Great Kings..."

There was a short introduction at the front, followed by all kinds of flaws afterwards.

"Violetleaf King? He is one of the Ten Great Kings as well?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

He didn't think that the silhouette man would also be an Otherworldly Demon King, just like the three fellows he had dealt with previously.

He had already eliminated three of the Qingtian Ten Great Kings... If their leader were to learn about it, would the other party skin him alive?

"Elder Xu!"

While Zhang Xuan was astonished by what he was reading, the shorter of the two men hurriedly rushed forward with his palm raised, choosing to face the devastating attack in place of the taller man.

Boom!

As the two mights collided, the face of the shorter man paled, and he was sent flying in the next moment. While in the air, blood spurted uncontrollably from his mouth.

The powerful life force he harnessed a moment ago vanished instantaneously as if a popped balloon. By the time he crashed heavily onto the ground, the final breath had already escaped from his body.

"He was actually killed in a single palm?" Zhang Xuan clenched his fists tightly in astonishment.

Upon reaching Saint realm, there would be a qualitative evolution in one's level of existence. One's physical resilience would be enhanced significantly, allowing one to survive a greater extent of damage. The shorter man's cultivation was at Saint 1-dan pinnacle, and yet, he was killed on the spot with just a single palm... Was this the true strength of a Primordial Spirit realm expert?

But thinking about it, that was to be expected!

At Primordial Spirit realm, one's comprehension of the world had already reached an unfathomable level. The reason why Zhang Xuan was able to kill three of them previously was through utilizing various different means to overwhelm them. In truth, not once had he clashed with them at all.

If he were to really engage a Primordial Spirit realm expert in a direct confrontation, not even five of him combined would even be sufficient to faze the other party!

"Elder Xue!"

Seeing that his companion had been killed while trying to save him, the face of the white-bearded elder, Elder Xu, warped in fury. He turned his gaze towards the silhouette before him with killing intent raging in his eyes.

Flicking his hand, he took out a small jade bottle and opened it. A black-colored beetle with a golden hue on its mouth flew out from the bottle.

Weng weng weng!

The beetle was only around the size of a fingernail, but it flew at an incredible speed. Its fluttering wings produced a particularly unnerving sound.

Biting his finger, Elder Xu dripped a droplet of blood on the beetle.

Tzzzzz!

Upon seeing fresh blood, the beetle excitedly opened its mouth and gulped it clean within two mouthfuls. Following which, a brilliant silver glow emanated from its body, as if a certain ability of it had been activated.

"Could that be... a venomous bug?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

He had read quite a few books relating to poison back on the Red Lotus Mountain Range Poison Hall, and there were some records relating to poison masters nurturing venomous bugs using their own blood. Such bugs were capable to producing frightening poison whenever fed with human blood.

"To possess a venomous bug... Could it be that the both of them are poison masters?" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in excitement.

His purpose for coming to Jingyuan City was to find the Poison Hall, but to do so, he would require the guide of the poison masters. However, to conceal themselves from the Master Teacher Pavilion, the poison masters often moved in secrecy, never appearing in public view. As such, it was nigh impossible to find them. This was also the reason why Zhang Xuan could only resort to the Sepulture Flower to lure them in.

Yet, who could have thought that he would meet them here...

"From the looks of it now, it seems like the reason why the city lord is determined to obtain the Sepulture Flower is to lure the poison masters out as well..." At this point, Zhang Xuan also came to a realization as well.

Judging from the current state of affairs, it seemed like the city lord was under the command of the Otherworldly Demon Kings, and he was acting on their behalf... But why would the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe be interested in finding the Poison Hall?

Perplexed, Zhang Xuan turned to Elder Xu, and a corresponding book on the latter materialized in the Library of Heaven's Path.

"The Grand Elder of the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall, 6-star pinnacle poison master..."

The other party's identity was clearly written in the book. Just like what Zhang Xuan had guessed, the other party was indeed one of the elders of the Poison Hall.

While Zhang Xuan was still analyzing the situation, the venomous bug finally had its fill of blood. With a light silver glow on its body, it flew straight for the Violetleaf King.

"Do you really think that a mere Silverarmor Venomous Beetle will suffice against me? You sure are underestimating me..." Sneering coldly, the Violetleaf King raised his palm and struck at the beetle.

Hula!

An incredible surge of fiery zhenqi burst forth, threatening to burn the beetle down to ashes. However, the latter was simply too nimble. It dodged the Violetleaf King's attack with ease and headed towards the aerial space right above him. With the fluttering of its wings, it scattered a pile of silver powder all around.

"Hmph!" The Violetleaf King flung his sleeves and swept the silver powder away.

At the same, he shot bursts of sword qi from his fingertips towards the beetle.

Tzzzzz!

The sword qi traversed through space at an incredible speed, but the beetle was even quicker. As it treaded around the bursts of sword qi, it continuously released a unique gas. Not too far away, the city lord inadvertently breathed in a mouthful of it. His face immediately paled, and his body began wobbling weakly before falling to the ground.

Just by breathing in a mouthful of the gas, he was already incapacitated by the poison.

"Not too bad, you do have some tricks up your sleeves!" Seeing the city lord falling to the ground, on the verge of dying at any moment, the Violetleaf King's complexion finally turned grim.

With an abrupt twist of its body, it created a thin energy barrier around it, warding off the poisonous powder and gas from the beetle.

"That venomous bug is formidable, but it is still impossible for it to defeat the Violetleaf King!" Looking closely at the battle, Zhang Xuan shook his head.

Even though his current strength was far beneath the Violetleaf King, he could still determine the flow of the battle precisely with his sharp eye of discernment.

The venomous bug which Elder Xu had released was indeed formidable, unmatched by cultivators of the same cultivation as him. However, it was still a little too weak to poison a Saint 4-dan expert to death.

Putting everything aside, just the fact that the Violetleaf King hadn't even used the prowess of his Primordial Spirit once ever since the very start of the battle clearly displayed the difference in the differing positions of both sides.

Primordial Spirits were capable of conducting attacks on one's soul directly, and it was the strongest offensive mean of Saint 4-dan experts. On top of that, despite the potency of the beetle's poison, it was unable to breach the latter's defenses. With this, the victor of the battle was already clear.

As expected, after seeing through the moves of the beetle, the Violetleaf King decided to end the battle there and then. With a light chuckle, a powerful force burst forth from his glabella, "Kneel down!"

Boom!

The voice was deafening, reminiscent of thunder. Upon hearing the voice, the flying beetle suddenly began wobbling unstably, as if intoxicated.

Pu!

Not too far away, Elder Xu also spurted a mouthful of blood, as if he had been struck by the soul attack as well.

"Could it be... a Lifebound Venomous Bug?" Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up.

A Lifebound Venomous Bug could be considered as the clone of a poison master. By feeding a bug with one's blood essence frequently, one could infuse a portion of his soul into the bug's soul, thus further enhancing the strength of the bug and one's control over it. However, should one's Lifebound Venomous Bug die, one would incur severe damage or even die on the spot.

"I see, no wonder your beetle is so formidable. So it is a Lifebound Venomous Bug..." Naturally, the Violetleaf King also realized the same. With a light chuckle, he swiftly

grabbed it with his hand.

Ji ji ji ji ji!

The beetle's movement was already hindered from the soul attack it suffered earlier, so it was unable to dodge from the Violetleaf King's hand at all. Trapped, it struggled desperately, but it was unable to escape at all.

"If you were a little stronger, this thing might still be able to threaten me. But in your current state, dream on!" The Violetleaf King flicked his finger lightly at the beetle, and under the impact, Elder Xu staggered weakly, and his face paled further.

Poison masters may be formidable, and the poison they concocted were extremely difficult to guard against, but ultimately, Elder Xu was only a Saint 1-dan pinnacle cultivator. It was too difficult a feat for him to kill a Saint 4-dan Otherworldly Demon King.

"Bring me to the Poison Hall, and I can consider sparing your life. Otherwise, I can't guarantee what will happen to you!"

Grabbing the beetle tightly in his hands, the Violetleaf King looked at Elder Xu coldly, the killing intent in his eyes unconcealed.

"This is a good opportunity for me..." Seeing that the Violetleaf King would make a move any time soon, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

If he could save Elder Xu, he could very well earn the latter's trust. If so, there would be a good chance he would be able to convince the latter to bring him to the Poison Hall.

This was far more reliable than capturing a poison master and interrogating him.

Just that... how could he save the other party from the hands of a Saint 4-dan Otherworldly Demon King?

A deep frown emerged on Zhang Xuan's forehead.

Chapter 989

Poison Match

His current cultivation was only at Nascent Saint pinnacle. Even though he could subdue even Saint 2-dan cultivators easily due to the various means he possessed, he was still too weak from matching up to a Primordial Spirit realm opponent.

If he were to intervene without a feasible plan, there was a very good chance he could be killed.

At the moment, the best weapon he had against a Primordial Spirit realm opponent was his Heaven's Path zhenqi. If he could sneak his Heaven's Path zhenqi into the other party's body and poison him, there was a good chance that he could emerge victorious in the confrontation.

However, considering the alert state the Violetleaf King was in at the moment, it didn't seem like there was any good way to do so.

"However, my goal is to save Elder Xu, not to kill the Violetleaf King. This will be significantly easier. As long as I can find a way to win the Violetleaf King's trust, I should be able to find an opportunity to approach Elder Xu and take him to safety..." Zhang Xuan thought.

The true difficulty in this mission lay in winning Elder Xu's trust...

In truth, he could have easily stalled the Violetleaf King by sending his Otherworldly Demon puppets at the latter, thus earning him time to save Elder Xu. However, that would effectively dash his hopes of having Elder Xu bring him to the Poison Hall!

Besides, the reason why he was able to defeat the three Otherworldly Demon Kings was because he had managed to catch them off guard. On the other hand, considering the coincidental timing which the city lord had returned, there seemed to be a very good chance that the Violetleaf King had somehow learned of the Waterleaf King's death. If so, the Violetleaf King would surely be on his guard, making it hard for him to deal with the other party.

"Wait a moment. Perhaps, I can try working on him from the Waterleaf King's side..."
A thought suddenly flashed across Zhang Xuan's mind.

The Waterleaf King and the Violetleaf King were both members of the Qingtian Ten Great Kings, and it was definitely no coincidence for the both of them to appear at Jingyuan City simultaneously. It was very likely that they were here for the same purpose.

In other words, both of them were tasked with the mission of finding the Poison Hall. This would also explain why the Waterleaf King had headed to the auction hall to obtain the Sepulture Flower before being killed by him.

"Alright, I should just give it a try then!"

Glancing at the situation beneath, Elder Xu was in a perilous situation; he could very well lose his life any moment now. Zhang Xuan knew that there was no time for him to think the matter through, and he had to act swiftly. Thus, he nimbly leaped back down to the ground.

There was a formation around the courtyard which prevented one from entering and leaving. However, with Zhang Xuan's deep understanding of formations, he was capable of treading in and out of the formation without alerting anyone.

Very soon, he managed to sneak out of the formation. He swiftly warped his bones and muscles, transforming his appearance into that of one of the two guards that were by the Waterleaf King's side back then.

After that was done, he clasped his fist and reported loudly, "City lord, bad news! The elder whom you have instructed us to protect has been killed! The culprit is a 7-star master teacher, and he is currently making his way here..."

"The person who killed the Waterleaf King is a 7-star master teacher?"

As those words were spoken, the formation surrounding the courtyard vanished, and a figure appeared before Zhang Xuan's face.

The figure was the Violetleaf King.

He was still firmly holding onto the beetle in his hand, keeping Elder Xu in check. On the other hand, Elder Xu was lying feebly on the ground, severely wounded.

Zhang Xuan was visibly surprised by the sudden appearance of the man before him before hurriedly nodding, "Yes, elder!"

"What happened? Explain everything in detail to me!" the Violetleaf King ordered grimly.

As comrades working on the same mission, he had a jade token which indicated the present condition of the Waterleaf King. Just a moment ago, the jade token shattered, which meant that something must have happened to the Waterleaf King. As such, he hurriedly returned back to the City Lord Manor and summoned the city lord back to have the other party look into the matter.

Upon meeting the guard who had escorted the Waterleaf King to the auction, he couldn't help but question him anxiously.

"Earlier, when the elder was going to enter the auction hall, someone claiming to be his old friend stopped him and offered him a cup of wine. After chatting for a while, the elder proposed for the both of them to head to a tavern to have a drink together, and he ordered us not to follow him. As such, I am not too sure what happened afterwards. However, when I finally saw the elder once more, he was already dead. According to the accounts from eye-witnesses, it was the doing of a 7-star master teacher..."

Zhang Xuan had mixed the truth with falsehood, making it nigh impossible for the other party to ascertain the authenticity of his words in the short-term.

And what Zhang Xuan was banking on was this short-term.

As long as he could convince the other party of his identity, he would be able to slip into the manor and escape with Elder Xu.

"7-star master teacher?" Finding no apparent flaws in the other party's words, the Violetleaf King frowned.

How could any 7-star master teacher appear in a city as remote as Jingyuan City?

And why would the other party make a move against the Waterleaf King too?

He was confident that there was no one who would be able to see through their disguise, not even 7-star master teachers.

However... if the culprit wasn't a 7-star master teacher, considering the Waterleaf King's strength, there was indeed no one in Jingyuan City who would be able to kill him.

"I have no idea too!" Zhang Xuan said. "I only saw the elder's corpse when I arrived, so I brought it over..." After saying those words, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist, and the withered corpse of the Waterleaf King appeared on the ground.

"This is... Ignition of Primordial Spirit? He attempted to forcefully withdraw his Primordial Spirit?" the Violetleaf King narrowed his eyes in alarm.

As a fellow Otherworldly Demon King, he could tell that the Waterleaf King had died due from using their secret art to withdraw one's Primordial Spirit forcefully. Once it was used, one would die without fail... Just how powerful an enemy did he encounter that he would have to resort to this?

Could he have really met a 7-star master teacher?

If that was the case, they would really be in deep trouble!

It would be difficult for even him to escape from a master teacher of that caliber.

"This won't do. I have to get the location of the Poison Hall out from that fellow right now!" Alarmed, the Violetleaf King dared not to waste any time. He hurriedly turned his gaze back to Elder Xu, but what he saw left a deep frown on his forehead, "What are you doing?"

The guard, who had just reported the matter regarding the Waterleaf King to him earlier, had walked up to Elder Xu at some point in time, seemingly trying to help the latter up.

"Nothing much. I just think that his wounds are a little severe, so I wondered if he needed any help..." Zhang Xuan replied with an awkward smile.

"You are not needed here, back down!" Seeing how a guard dared to overstep his place, the Violetleaf King's face darkened.

"Yes!" Nodding, Zhang Xuan took two steps backward while pulling Elder Xu's body with him before abruptly stomping on the ground. All of a sudden, the paused formation whirled into life once more, bringing the thick layer of mist back around

the courtyard.

"What?" Alarmed, the Violetleaf King immediately rushed forward.

However, he soon found himself lost within the formation which he could traverse through easily a few moments ago, as if someone had altered its structure. At this rate, that two fellows would escape before he was able to find them.

In this instant, he realized that he had been tricked. The guard had used the Waterleaf King's corpse to distract him.

"Damn it!" With a savage look on his face, killing intent began spilling forth from the Violetleaf King's body. In the blink of an eye, he reverted back to his Otherworldly Demon form. He thrust his palm forward and struck the formation.

He was intending to break the formation down using brute force.

With his prowess as a Saint 4-dan expert, destroying the formation of a grade-6 pinnacle formation posed no difficulty at all.

...

Zhang Xuan took a glance at the overburdened formation around him before quickly turning to the debilitated elder before him and asked, "Elder Xu, are you fine?"

"Who are you?" Elder Xu asked doubtfully.

"I am a poison master, but this isn't a good time for us to talk about that. We have to escape right now, or else we might very well die here!"

While speaking, the formation shook violently once more, seemingly on the verge of collapsing.

"Poison master?" Elder Xu frowned. However, after a brief moment of hesitation, he eventually nodded and said, "Indeed, this isn't the place for us to talk. We can discuss about the matter once we get out!"

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded. "I have been in the City Lord Manor for some time now, so I am rather familiar with its layout and formations. Elder Xu, follow me!"

After saying those words, he quickly rushed off in a certain direction.

On the other hand, Elder Xu took out a pill and swallowed it. His ghastly pale complexion finally regained a slight red tinge to it. After which, he got to his feet and quickly followed the other party's footsteps.

He did harbor some doubts towards the other party's identity as a poison master, but given the circumstances they were in, he had little choice but to follow him. The other party was his only hope out at the moment.

Following behind the other party, they swiftly made their way out of the courtyard before skillfully maneuvering around the City Lord Manor.

While making their way out, Elder Xu realized that not only did the other party have a deep understanding of the layout of the City Lord Manor, he had a frightening grasp of the formations in the area as well. With just a light tap or kick, he could easily activate the many unactivated formations throughout the manor, stalling the tightly-pursuing Violetleaf King.

Not too long later, they managed to make their way out of the City Lord Manor. They swiftly flew away while keeping their bodies close to the surface. This would make it harder for the Violetleaf King to find them, thus buying them even more time to get to safety.

After flying for around twenty breaths, they finally stopped before a vast building.

"This is... Inkcloud Quarter?" Elder Xu was taken aback.

He had long heard of the famous Inkcloud Quarter of Jingyuan City, and he had even been here quite a few times himself. They were still being pursued by their enemies, so why would the other party bring him here all of the sudden?

"Our enemies control the City Lord Manor. If we were to escape right now, regardless of where we escape, it won't take long for their men to find and capture us, especially considering the state of injury you are in. Thus, it will be better for us to find a place to hide and recuperate at first!" Noticing the doubts in Elder Xu's eyes, Zhang Xuan explained.

"You're right." Elder Xu nodded in agreement.

The other party was right. Jingyuan City was located amidst a snowy plain, so there was no cover they could make use of beyond the city. If they were to attempt to escape now, it was very likely that they would be spotted by the men of the City Lord Manor. If so, there was a good chance they might find themselves cornered.

On top of possessing a deep understanding of formations, the other party was a particularly intelligent person as well.

With such thoughts in mind, he followed the other party into Inkcloud Quarter. Turning at several bends, he soon found himself standing before a chamber.

The chamber was embedded with a formation that could isolate all auras within.

"This should help us hide from them for a while." Zhang Xuan said as he stepped into the chamber.

This was the same place where he taught Hu Yunsheng a lesson previously. Considering the elaborate security measures implemented on the chamber, it was the most apt for the current situation they were in.

"Un." Elder Xu nodded as he entered the chamber. Instead of going straight into recuperating from his injuries, he turned his gaze towards Zhang Xuan instead, and with a sharp glint in his eyes, he asked, "You said that you are a poison master. Do you have an emblem to ascertain your identity?"

Honestly speaking, it was a little hard for him to believe that the Nascent Saint cultivator before him had managed to save him from the clutches of a Saint 4-dan expert so easily.

There was a chance that the both of them were in cahoots with one another, and they were intentionally putting up this show to convince him to bring them to the Poison Hall.

"I don't have an emblem." Zhang Xuan shook his head. "I have been studying poison by myself so far, so I haven't taken any poison master examination yet..."

"You haven't taken any poison master examination yet?" Elder Xu's face darkened. "Do you think that it is possible to study poison by oneself? You might be able to fool amateurs with those words, but do you honestly expect me to believe the words you are speaking?"

To become a master in the Way of Poison, one would have to examine and study the properties of all kinds of poison. The slightest bit of mistake could lead to death, and even under the guidance of a teacher, it wasn't uncommon for poison masters to accidentally poison themselves to death. Yet, the fellow before him was saying that he had been studying poison by himself? He must be joking!

"I knew that you wouldn't believe it..." Seeing the other party's expression, Zhang Xuan shook his head bitterly and said, "Honestly speaking, there is no way I can really explain it to you... Since that's the case, why don't you have a poison match with me? If you were to win, it goes without saying that I will die in your hands. On the other hand, if I win, I hope that you can bring me to the Poison Hall so that I can officially take the poison master examination!"

"You wish to have a poison match with me?" Elder Xu looked at the young man before him with narrowed eyes.

In truth, the possession of an emblem wasn't a clear indicator of one's identity either. After all, the enemy could always kill a poison master and steal his emblem over.

The only reliable method to identify a poison master was through his usage of poison!

If the other party was really capable of wielding poison as a weapon, he had to be a real poison master. There was no way to fake that.

"Alright then!"

Elder Xu nodded.

Chapter 990

Tastes Not Bad

"How should we conduct the match? You can determine the rules!" Hearing the other party agree to it, Zhang Xuan said.

Considering the other party's temperament, it was very likely that the other party wouldn't spill the location of the Poison Hall under threat, even if he were to have him killed. Besides, there was no way he could guarantee that the other party wouldn't give him a fake location to do him in.

Furthermore, it was likely that he would require the Poison Hall's help for Wei Ruyan's condition. It was best for him not to get on bad terms with them.

As such, the best way to go around doing so was to convince the other party that he was a poison master and have the other party bring him there personally.

"Very well. In my current conditions, I am unable to concoct poison, but I do have a few poisons in my possession. I will allow you to pick from any of them, and if you are able to neutralize the poison contained in it, I will acknowledge that you are a poison master!" Elder Xu contemplated for a moment before flicking his wrist, and eight different ceramic jars appeared before him.

There were no labels on any of the jars, and each of them was thoroughly sealed. It was impossible to tell what was stored within from the outside.

Nevertheless, through his Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan was able to clearly sense the tremendous toxicity contained within each of the ceramic jars. It felt as if opening the seal on any of them could bring great bloodshed upon an area.

Just like medicinal herbs, it was possible for potent poison to gain spirit. Once it was released, it could result in a devastating calamity if there was no antidote to curb it.

This was precisely the reason why poison masters were feared by all other occupations.

"These are... grade-6 pinnacle poisons!" Zhang Xuan remarked.

The poisons contained within the ceramic jars were very potent, only paling slightly in comparison to the beetle from before.

"Indeed, these are all grade-6 pinnacle poisons. You can freely choose from any of them. As long as you are able to concoct an antidote to one within two hours, I will acknowledge that you are a poison master!" Elder Xu said.

"Alright!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

Without any hesitation, he picked up the first ceramic jar, opened it, and lowered his head to examine what was within.

On the other hand, upon seeing Zhang Xuan's movements, Elder Xu's face darkened.

Poison masters had a unique series of steps in order to assess a poison so as to avoid being poisoned themselves, especially when they were unsure about the nature of the poison. Yet, the fellow before him was clearly ignorant of it. To be smelling the content of the jars as if he was savoring good wine...

Was he really that courageous, or did he have no knowledge of poison at all?

Even a 3-star poison master would know better than to do something so reckless!

Just as Elder Xu thought that the other party would be incapacitated by the poison gas emanating from the ceramic jars, he saw the other party pour out a pile of poison from one of the jars onto his hand and dabbed it with his finger.

"..." Huge veins bulged out on Elder Xu's temples.

The other party was seeking death! Most grade-6 pinnacle poisons were capable of seeping through one's skin. If the poison were to seep into one's meridians and reach the organs, even a Saint 2-dan expert could potentially face fatality, let alone a Nascent Saint cultivator!

Where in the world would one find another poison master assessing poisons in such a manner?

If this was really how poison masters assessed poison, just how many of them would

die each time the Poison Hall wanted to examine a new concoction or medicinal herb? Come a few rounds of that, and poison masters would have gone extinct themselves even without the master teachers making a move.

Shaking his head, Elder Xu was wondering whether he should intervene and save the young man before him when the other party suddenly took out a white cloth and placed it neatly before his chest. After which, the other party adjusted his posture upright, reminiscent of a dignified gentleman preparing himself for his meal. Following that, he took out a spoon and scooped the poison powder on his palm before gracefully lifting it up to his mouth.

Upon seeing this sight, Elder Xu nearly keeled over.

He thought that it was already foolish for one to come into contact with poison barehanded, but... consuming it directly?

Are you tired of living?

More importantly... that white cloth before your chest, the upright posture, and that spoon... What the heck are you doing?

You are here to create an antidote to my poison, not to dine on it...

Elder Xu couldn't help but feel his hair stand on end. He immediately flicked his wrist to take out the antidote so as to treat the other party, but before he could make a move, he saw the other party smack his lips before looking at him in discontentment, "Elder Xu, the poison you concoct is appalling. Its texture is disgusting, and the taste is truly horrendous. There is no one in the world who will be willing to try it a second time! Fail!"

Hearing those words, Elder Xu nearly collapsed to the ground.

Brother, that's a poison over there, not food. You are supposed to die right after eating it... who in the world will be able to give it a second try?

Fail... Fail your head!

Those who have eaten the poison will be too caught up in the fear of imminent death, who would still have the energy to bother about the taste?

Just as he was thinking whether the world had gone mad, the other party moved on to open the second ceramic jar, scooped out a spoonful of the poison within, and placed it in his mouth. "The taste is still acceptable, but if you can stir-fry it for a little longer, the texture will be even better."

After which, the other party moved on to the third jar. "This is a little too sweet. Did you add honey in there? Hai, I happen to really dislike honey. You should consider adding Chinese liquorice in place of honey the next time you concoct it!"

"This one will be better if you dissolve it in water. However, it will still be a little viscous and gooey, so you will have to pay more attention to its presentation to make it more appetizing. As for the taste, if you were to pair it with some barbecued meat and fine wine, I still might try eating one bowl. Anything more, and it might be a little too heavy. Personally, I don't really like to eat such gooey food..."

...

After tasting each poison, Zhang Xuan would appraise it earnestly.

"..." Elder Xu tugged at his hair in a frenzy.

The grade-6 pinnacle poisons which he concocted were capable of killing even Saint 1-dan pinnacle experts easily, so how could the other party be eating them so leisurely, as if they were delicacies?

Could his poisons have lost their effectiveness due to being stored for too long?

"But that shouldn't be possible!"

Perplexed, Elder Xu picked up a jar which the other party had eaten from previously, dabbed his finger in it, and placed it into his mouth.

Pu!

As soon as the poison seeped into his throat, he immediately spurted a mouthful of blood, and his body began trembling uncontrollably. A sharp pain tore through his entire body, and he felt as if all of his meridians had burst simultaneously.

Astonished, he swiftly took out the antidote and swallowed it. It took a moment before the unbearable pain finally receded. With a twitching face, he turned his gaze towards

the young man, who was still in the midst of tasting his poisons not too far away, with a look of daze.

Very soon, the other party was done testing all eight jars of poisons. However, he still had a look of reverie on his face, as if he hadn't gotten enough of it yet.

"How is it?" Unable to bear it any longer, Elder Xu asked.

The other party nodded earnestly and replied, "As expected of grade-6 pinnacle poisons, their flavors are indeed not bad. Right, for the last two poison, if you could make them a little crispier, the overall culinary experience for the diner could be elevated."

"..." Elder Xu's body stiffened.

He had spent a lifetime of effort and devotion to concocting these poisons, and he thought that he had become an unrivaled force in Tier-1 Empires with them. Yet, who could have thought that they would end up being savored by a Nascent Saint cultivator as if they were desserts... not to mention, he was even criticized for the lacking taste...

The heck, these are really all lethal poisons that can kill any men easily!

I really am a poison master, a very formidable poison master! I am not a confectioner...

Ignoring the other party's sudden insanity streak, Zhang Xuan shook his head.

In truth, he wasn't doing all of those actions intentionally. Due to his Heaven's Path zhenqi, those poisons were completely ineffective against him. It took a taste for him to realize that there were many flaws with them that should be corrected.

For one, since the poison was meant to be consumed, its flavor should at least be good so as to lessen the pain of the victim before his death.

"Cough cough. A-are you really fine? You ate so many poisons..." A while later, seeing how the fellow before him was still relishing in the taste of his poisons, not showing the slightest sign of being poisoned, Elder Xu asked with twitching lips.

"I am fine!" Zhang Xuan finally recovered from his trance. "How is it? Is this sufficient to confirm that I am a poison master?"

"Of course! If this isn't sufficient to confirm that you are a poison master, nothing else can!" Elder Xu shook his head with a bitter smile on his lips.

When he first heard that the other party had learned poison by himself, he thought that the other party was spouting nonsense. However, after seeing the other party devouring his poisons as if they were mere snacks, he immediately realized that he was mistaken.

Possessing a physique that was immune to poison, the other party could test any poison out on himself without any fear. Given so, it was indeed possible for him to have learned poison on his own.

"I'm relieved. Alright, you should hurry up and heal your wounds first. I'm afraid that we won't be able to hide from those fellows for too long here..." Seeing that the other party had finally acknowledged him, Zhang Xuan nodded and said.

While this chamber was capable of isolating aura, it wouldn't keep the Violetleaf King away from them forever. It was just a matter of time before he came knocking.

They had to swiftly flee from Jingyuan City and head to the Poison Hall.

"Un." Understanding that logic, Elder Xu nodded before taking out a couple of medicinal herbs from his storage ring and concocting it into a medicinal fluid. After he was done, he swallowed it.

His means of dealing with his wounds differed significantly from those of physicians and apothecaries. The latter aimed to nourish the deficiencies in one's bodies whereas the former utilized poison to stimulate one's body, forcing one's zhenqi to circulate faster and hasten the recovery.

Two different methods with the same aims.

It was impossible to say which was more effective than the other, but medicine strengthened one's core, allowing one to reach a greater height in the future. On the other hand, while poison might stimulate one's body potential in the short-term, but it could very well hurt one's foundations, limiting one's future achievements.

Seeing that Elder Xu needed some time to recuperate, Zhang Xuan silently left the chamber before reverting back to his form as 'Sun Qiang' to look for Hu Yunsheng.

"Elder, just a moment ago, the city lord has let out news that anyone who dares to compete for the Sepulture Flower will be considered as an enemy of the City Lord Manor. As a result, no one dared to bid for it during the auction. Shall I conduct another round of publicity and hold the auction a few days later?" Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, Hu Yunsheng immediately reported with an awkward look.

Due to the news released by the city lord, most of the interested buyers dared not make a move for fear of making an enemy out of the City Lord Manor. As a result, despite all of the other goods being successfully auctioned off, the Sepulture Flower remained untouched by any...

"There's no need for that." Zhang Xuan waved his hand.

Since he had already found a poison master, there was no need for him to auction the Sepulture Flower anymore.

"Yes!" Hu Yunsheng nodded before passing the jade box containing the Sepulture Flower over to Zhang Xuan.

Zhang Xuan took the jade box, and just as he was about to speak, a huge group of people suddenly walked over to them. The person leading the group was the person whom Zhang Xuan had just fled from at the City Lord Manor, the Violetleaf King.

At this moment, the Violetleaf King had already reverted back to his human form. Without using the Eye of Insight, it was nigh impossible to see through his disguise.

"Boss Hu, this is an esteemed guest of the City Lord Manor, Elder Violetleaf. Something very important to him has been stolen just a moment ago, and we suspect that the thief is hiding in Inkcloud Quarter. Thus, we hope to conduct a search here. I hope that you can cooperate with our investigation!" A guard walked over and clasped his fist.

"You wish to conduct a search in my Inkcloud Quarter?" Hu Yunsheng's face darkened as a deep frown appeared on his forehead.

In his view, the other party was simply making up a story to forcefully snatch the Sepulture Flower from them after failing to obtain it in the auction.

"Indeed. I hope that you won't hinder our investigation efforts, or else we will have no choice but suspect that Inkcloud Quarter is colluding with the thief!" the guard spoke with a threatening edge in his voice.

Hearing those words, Hu Yunsheng felt so angry that his entire face turned crimson with rage. The guard was blatantly threatening him to his face!

Yet, there was nothing he could do about the situation, so Hu Yunsheng fell silent, not knowing how he should respond. At that moment, a voice suddenly sounded.

"Something very important has been stolen? Indeed, it is understandable why one would be anxious after losing something important to him. May we know what the item is? Perhaps, we might be able to offer some help to you!"

Turning around, Hu Yunsheng saw Elder Sun Qiang speaking with an earnest smile on his lips.

Chapter 991

The Crazy Violetleaf King

His sincerity seemed to have come from the depths of his heart. It carried a natural charm that compelled the trust of others, leaving others unable to doubt him.

"The item is not important. What is more important is the two thieves who stole from the City Lord Manor. If they aren't captured, what will become of the authority and dignity of Jingyuan City?" Seemingly infected by the 'earnesty' of the other party, the guard replied.

"Indeed! One who dares to steal from the City Lord Manor must be severely punished for his actions!" Zhang Xuan exclaimed vehemently in agreement. "However, I feel that it won't do for you to continue searching in such an open manner. If the other party is truly hidden here, he would have realized that you are in the vicinity and quickly make his escape. Why don't you allow Boss Hu to activate the formations in the surroundings first so that the enemy has nowhere to escape? This way, we will have all the time to search for the two thieves!"

"This..." The guard dared not make a decision, so he turned his gaze towards the Violetleaf King to seek his approval.

"Un." After a moment of hesitation, the Violetleaf King nodded in approval. "Those two fellows have a deep understanding of formations, so it will be best if you can activate the strongest formation of your Inkcloud Quarter. Otherwise, the both of them will still be able to get away easily!"

That fellow who saved Elder Xu was able to alter and activate the formation in the courtyard within moments after coming into contact with it. This was a feat which even he was incapable of accomplishing. From this in itself, it could be seen that the other party had a deep understanding of the Way of Formations. As such, it was unlikely that ordinary formations would be able to stop him.

"He's so formidable? I see... It is fortunate that I have a powerful formation plate in my possession. I will activate it right now!" With a smile, Zhang Xuan said.

"A formation plate?" The Violetleaf King frowned.

"Yes, I obtained it while I was on an expedition a while ago. It's a grade-7 formation, so I don't really have much of a chance to use it usually. Since the two scoundrels you speak of are so formidable, I feel that it will be safer to use it!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

"Grade-7?" The Violetleaf King's eyes lit up.

It would be difficult for even an expert of his tier to escape from a formation plate of that grade. Who could have thought that the lowly Inkcloud Quarter would actually have such a treasure amongst them? It was no wonder they had so many treasures to auction!

It really shouldn't be underestimated just because it was located in a remote city.

"That's right." Zhang Xuan nodded as he flicked his wrist.

A formation plate appeared in his palm. Infusing zhenqi into it, a loud buzz sounded in the air as dense mist swiftly filled the surroundings.

"Incredible!" The Violetleaf King nodded in approval.

It was a simple Beguilement Formation, but it was extremely stable. Even if he were to exert his full strength, it would take at least ten minutes or so for him to break free. If it was used against a Saint 2-dan or 3-dan cultivator, there was no way the other party would be able to escape from it.

After I capture those two fellows later on, I should grab this formation plate as well...

A cold glint flashed across the Violetleaf King's eyes.

As an Otherworldly Demon, he harbored a deep-seated hatred for the humans. Once those two fellows were found, there would be no need for him to put up an appearance before the other party anymore. Naturally, the first thing he should do then was to get that formation plate from the other party.

If he had such a formation plate back in the City Lord Manor, those two fellows wouldn't have been able to escape in the first place.

"This formation is not too bad. Alright, bring our men to search for them!" The

Violetleaf King waved his hand and said.

Under the effects of the formation, if those two escapees were really at Inkcloud Quarter, there was no way they would be able to escape. However... considering the thickness of the mist, there was no way their men would be able to maneuver around the formation easily. They would require a guide to bring them around.

"Alright!" Zhang Xuan nodded before instructing, "Hu Yunsheng, bring our friends from the City Lord Manor to take a look around. Right, bring some fine wine over as well. I will be sitting here with Elder Violetleaf here, awaiting the results of the search!"

"Yes!" Even though Hu Yunsheng had no idea why Elder Sun Qiang was obeying the orders of the City Lord Manor, he could tell that the other party had an idea in mind. Thus, he nodded his head before leading the guards away.

Where they advanced, the mist would automatically part, as if someone was leading them around.

"It will suffice to find the two thieves as soon as possible. There is no need to prepare wine or that sort!" The Violetleaf King waved his hand impatiently.

"That won't do! You are a person whom even our city lord has to address as elder, it is only right for us to offer a grand welcome to someone as esteemed as you..." Zhang Xuan smiled courteously.

As the person controlling the formation plate, he could easily manipulate where the guards were heading to with his thoughts, so he need not fear them finding Elder Xu.

Not too long later, Zhu Xiao carried a tray of alcohol and side dishes in.

"Elder, please!" Zhang Xuan poured a cup of wine out politely and offered it to the Violetleaf King earnestly.

"Un."

The Violetleaf King was initially reluctant to drink, but facing the other party's clear eyes and earnest gesture, he eventually nodded in agreement and took the cup.

Even so, he still extended his Spiritual Perception to the wine to check on it.

A moment later, he heaved a sigh of relief. A hint of embarrassment surfaced in his eyes.

After checking on the content of the wine, he realized that there was no problem with it. The other party was earnestly offering him a cup of wine, but he actually ended up viewing the kind gesture with skepticism...

Raising his gaze, he saw that the middle-aged man opposite to him had already gulped down the cup of fine wine before him.

"Is the wine not to your liking? Men, bring us another bottle of..." Seeing that the other party wasn't drinking, Zhang Xuan asked worriedly.

"There is no need for that!" The Violetleaf King raised his hand to stop the other party before gulping down the cup of wine heartily.

In his view, it was a mere cup of wine, so there was no harm drinking it. Putting aside the fact that he had already ascertained that there was no poison contained within the wine, even if it had been spiked, with his powerful cultivation, he would surely be able to suppress it easily.

"Good!"

Seeing the Violetleaf King gulp down the wine, Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction. "You are indeed straightforward, Violetleaf King, unlike that... what is his name called again? Yes, Waterleaf King! I had to speak until the point that my lips were about to crack before he was willing to take a single sip. He sure was a difficult person to deal with!"

"Waterleaf King?" Hearing those words right after putting his wine cup down, the Violetleaf King's eyes narrowed in astonishment. His face immediately turned grim, "Who are you?"

Previously, the guards had only addressed him as Elder Violetleaf and not Violetleaf King.

And more importantly... the other party actually spoke about the Waterleaf King!

It wasn't too long ago that his companion had been killed, and thinking back, it seemed like the guard that saved Elder Xu from before had said that his companion was offered

a cup of wine as well... Could there be some kind of link between the two?

"Sit down, sit down. There's no need to get too anxious over here. Worse come to worse, you will only be killed like the Waterleaf King. There is no need to make a huge fuss over something as small as this." Zhang Xuan waved his hands nonchalantly as he continued pouring two more cups of wine for the both of them.

"You... Are you the one who killed the Waterleaf King? You are that 7-star master teacher?" Upon coming to that realization, the eyes of the Violetleaf King narrowed, and all of a sudden, he realized that his entire body was drenched in cold sweat.

If the other party was capable of killing the Waterleaf King, it went without saying that the other party had the ability to kill him as well. How could he have been so negligent as to allow such a powerful expert to get into proximity to him without him noticing?

"7-star master teacher? You still can't tell at this point? I was the one who saved Elder Xu!" With a look of displeasure, Zhang Xuan began warping his muscles and bones, reverting back to the form of the guard from before.

"Y-you... I will kill you!"

Overwhelmed by fury and craze, the Violetleaf King roared furiously. He abruptly got to his feet and struck his palm at a downward trajectory towards Zhang Xuan, intending to smash the other party into the ground.

To think that they, members of the Ten Great Kings of the Qingtian Lineage, would end up being toyed by a human like that. The Violetleaf King felt so angry that he could explode.

"Hai, youngsters nowadays sure don't know how to rein in their temper..." Seeing that the other party had made a move against him, Zhang Xuan shook his head sighed.

In the next moment, the Violetleaf King's face abruptly paled, and his body began trembling non-stop. Zhang Xuan didn't even move a single finger throughout the entire duration, but the other party's knee had already caved in, leaving him kneeling on the floor as huge mouthfuls of blood spurted from his mouth.

Contained within the cup of fine wine was his Heaven's Path zhenqi. After infiltrating into the Violetleaf King's body, Zhang Xuan could turn it into lethal poison at his whim.

"You poisoned me..." Upon coming to a realization, the Violetleaf King's body trembled non-stop with fear reflected in his eyes.

"Of course. If I don't poison you, do you think that a Nascent Saint like me will be able to defeat you?"

Huala!

While speaking, he filled the two wine cups to the brim without spilling a droplet.

"Nascent Saint? You are... a Nascent Saint?" The Violetleaf King could hardly believe his ears.

He could still resign himself to his defeat had the enemy been a 7-star master teacher, but a Nascent Saint cultivator actually managed to poison him? How could this be?

"Are you really unable to see through my cultivation?" Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"Nascent Saint... Then how can you possibly kill the Waterleaf King? I don't believe you!" The Violetleaf King shook his head vehemently and roared furiously.

Even if the Waterleaf King had been poisoned, he was still a Saint 4-dan expert. Considering that the Waterleaf King had gone to the extent of using their secret art to forcefully draw his Primordial Spirit from his body, it shouldn't have been difficult for him to kill the Nascent Saint fellow before his eyes. Even if that wasn't the case, the Waterleaf King should have been able to flee and alert him of the matter. How could he have been killed without letting out the slightest bit of news?

"There is no need to get anxious here. The Waterleaf King isn't the only one. I have also killed the Goldenleaf King and Greenleaf King as well, so this is really nothing to make a fuss over. Don't worry, I will have you reunite with the rest of them very soon!" Lifting up a cup of wine, Zhang Xuan sipped on it before saying nonchalantly.

"You... Pu!" The Violetleaf King's body staggered weakly.

It was for certain that the Waterleaf King had been killed; he had seen the corpse personally. Yet, for the Goldenleaf King and Greenleaf King to be dead as well... the Violetleaf King nearly lost his sanity.

Which of the Qingtian Ten Great Kings weren't famous figures who had made a name

for themselves? Putting aside a small Tier-1 Empire like Hongyuan, not even Qingyuan Conferred Empire would dare to underestimate them.

Massacring an entire city might still be beyond him at the moment, but he could definitely cause devastating damage, and there would be no humans that could stop them.

To think that after the heavy price the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe spent to send the four of them over, three of them had ended up dying without accomplishing anything at all... Could this really be true?

The Violetleaf King's eyes flickered with fear. He knew that since the other party was able to name his other comrades, there was a good chance that it was true. Not daring to remain there for a moment longer, the Violetleaf King immediately turned around to flee.

Goldenleaf, Greenleaf, and Waterleaf, none of these three Kings were any weaker than him. Yet, they ended up being killed in that Nascent Saint cultivator's hands. The Violetleaf King didn't feel that he would be an exception.

In any case, it would be best for him to flee and rethink his next move. The current situation was simply not to his advantage.

As for his poison, he should be able to find a way to deal with it eventually...

"Trying to flee? I have already set up a formation for you here. Don't you think it's a little impolite of you to leave like that?" Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan snapped his finger.

In the next moment, the Violetleaf King, who had just barely begun flying, felt a sharp pain coursing through his entire body, causing him to convulse uncontrollably. In the next moment, he plummeted from the sky and fell back onto the ground.

"If I can't get away, I will just have to bring you down with me!" Feeling the lethal poison tear his body apart, the Violetleaf King felt death slowly approaching him. Knowing that it was unlikely that he would be able to escape with his life today, he gritted his teeth in resolution and charged towards the middle-aged man before his eyes.

Since he wasn't getting out of here alive, he decided to bring someone down with him!

"Why do all of you like to resort to suicide attacks?" Zhang Xuan shook his head.

He had already dealt with a couple of the Qingtian Ten Great Kings, but all of them ended up resorting to a suicide attack in the end... They really could use some creativity!

"You guys, go and dig out the pill in his mouth. After that, give him a good thrashing!"

With a flick of his wrist, eight Otherworldly Demon puppets immediately appeared before his eyes before charging towards the Violetleaf King.

"Those are Otherworldly Demons? No, they are puppets!" Seeing the eight figures charging towards him, the Violetleaf King's body trembled.

Shouldn't the privilege of being escorted by so many Otherworldly Demon puppets something that only Otherworldly Demon Kings possessed?

Am I the Otherworldly Demon King, or you are?

Why does it feel like... I am completely alone in this world? Not even having a single subordinate or ally, what a cruel life I am living...

Chapter 992

The Violetleaf King Submits

The Violetleaf King wasn't given much time to brood over his plight. Upon hearing the middle-aged man's command, the Otherworldly Demon puppets had already charged forward.

If it had been before, against these Saint 3-dan puppets, the Violetleaf King would still have been able to stand his ground. However, plagued with lethal poison, he was barely able to fight at all. A few moments later, his entire face was filled with footprints, and his head had swollen up to the size of a ripe watermelon. Lying on the ground feebly, his breathing was weak, and it seemed like he would die at any moment soon.

With the wine cup in his hand, Zhang Xuan walked up gracefully and glanced down at the Violetleaf King, "Become my servant, and I can pardon you."

With the experience from the previous Kings, it was indeed unlikely for any of the Otherworldly Demon Kings to submit to him. Nevertheless, it was still worth a try. Were he to succeed, he would have a Saint 4-dan Otherworldly Demon serving him. If so, he would have more cards to play should he find himself in dire situations.

At the same time, he could also learn of the secret plans that the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was up to—Why did they dispatch so many Kings over to the Master Teacher Continent? Why were they looking for the Poison Hall?

"You... dream on!" Hearing that request, the Violetleaf King clenched his teeth furiously.

To think that someone actually wanted to enslave a respected Otherworldly Demon King like him... Intolerable!

"Very well then!" Zhang Xuan turned his head around and commanded, "Continue beating him up!"

He didn't have the slightest shred of goodwill or pity for the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. If the other party was unwilling to submit to him, he would just have to kill the

other party.

Peng peng peng peng!

The Otherworldly Demon puppets launched yet another tirade of punches and kicks, and it didn't take long before the Violetleaf King's face to turn completely pale. He was pummeled so badly that he couldn't even find the strength in him to talk.

This time, Zhang Xuan had learnt from his previous lesson. He had sealed the other party's acupoint to ensure that he would be unable to draw his Primordial Spirit out. This way, the other party wouldn't be able to pose any threat to him.

After pummeling for a while longer, Zhang Xuan noted that the Violetleaf King was just a step away from death, so he had his puppets pause for a moment before instructing, "Vicious, I will leave this fellow to you. You must uncover the motive behind the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe seeking out the Poison Hall from him..."

Since Vicious seemed to have a way to deal with the Otherworldly Demon Kings, Zhang Xuan couldn't be bothered to conduct Soul Search. After all, the other party's strength was far stronger than him, and conducting a Soul Search forcefully could very well wound his soul.

"Don't worry, young master!" Vicious reassured.

In the next moment, a finger abruptly materialized in the air and tapped on the Violetleaf King's glabella.

"This is... the aura of an Otherworldly Demon Emperor?" Sensing the strength exerted by the finger, the Violetleaf King suddenly felt a wave of helplessness.

The finger before him emanated the aura that was exclusive to Otherworldly Demons, and the concentration of the killing intent emanated had most definitely reached the level of an Otherworldly Demon Emperor.

An Otherworldly Demon Emperor actually acknowledged this young man as his master?

"Don't kill me! I... I am willing to acknowledge you as my master..."

The realization that an esteemed Otherworldly Demon Emperor had taken the young

man before him as his master seemed to have struck a chord within his mind, becoming the hammer which crushed the final shred of determination that he was firmly holding onto. All of a sudden, the idea of becoming the other party's servant didn't seem to be as big a deal as death.

He knew that he would be branded as a traitor for acknowledging a human as his master, and he could very well suffer a death worse than death were he to be caught. However, he had no other choice.

If he were to reject it, he knew that he would suffer the same fate which befell the Goldenleaf, Greenleaf, and Waterleaf King.

On the other hand, if he were to submit, he might still have a chance to survive.

"You wish to take me as your master?" Zhang Xuan was slightly taken aback. He didn't think that it was very likely to succeed, so he was surprised when the Violetleaf King gave in. With a light chuckle, he nodded and said, "Offer your soul!"

If he wished to gain absolute control over the other party, he would have to grasp the other party's soul in his hand.

"Yes!" A bitter smile emerged on the Violetleaf King's lips. Nevertheless, as one of the Kings of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, he had gone through many things in the past, allowing him to make crucial choices decisively. Since he had made his decision, he didn't hesitate for long before tearing a portion of his Primordial Spirit out and drew it out through his glabella to offer it to the young man before him.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan took in the portion of the Primordial Spirit and absorbed it into his soul.

In an instant, every single thought in the Violetleaf King's mind became apparent to him. As long as the other party were to even raise the thought of betrayal, he would be able to kill the other party in the blink of an eye.

"What a powerful soul! Could it be that he isn't a poison master but a soul oracle?"

On the other hand, the Violetleaf King was also astonished to sense the astounding strength which Zhang Xuan's soul possessed.

It was impossible for a Nascent Saint to possess such a powerful soul. The only

plausible explanation was that he was a soul oracle.

Just that... didn't the soul oracles go extinct long ago? How did his new master obtain their heritage and cultivate his soul to such a frightening level?

And more importantly, wasn't he a poison master? Was he practicing the two occupation simultaneously?

"Master, since I have already submitted to you, can you resolve the poison in my body now?" The Violetleaf King had many doubts in his mind, but he knew that this wasn't the time to ask them. With a bitter look on his face, he kneeled onto the ground and kowtowed deeply as he said.

He had taken a look at the poison in his body earlier, and he realized that he had never seen such a poison before. None of the antidotes he had in his possession seemed like it would work on it.

"Don't worry. Since you have submitted to me, i won't mistreat you!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

Hong long!

In the next moment, the Violetleaf King felt the lethal poison in his body working up once more. His face warped in horror, and he immediately started to plead for mercy. However, in the next moment, he realized that his wounds were beginning to recover under the nourishment of the 'lethal poison'.

"T-this..." The Violetleaf King was dumbfounded.

An incredibly potent poison which even he was helpless before had turned into an unparalleled Saint recovery medicine in the blink of an eye!

Poison in a thought, medicine in another, was the person before him an existence transcending a 7-star poison master? If that was really the case, that was really frightening!

One must know that if a poison master of that caliber were to enter the otherworldly battlefield, the entire Qingtian Lineage might very well be wiped off the face of the world!

In the midst of his shock, the Violetleaf King's wounds had already recovered to a fair extent. It wasn't a complete recovery, but at the very least, it wouldn't affect his basic movements.

Nevertheless, to be able to recover that quickly, the Violetleaf King was filled with awe and admiration for the young man before him. He kneeled to the floor and kowtowed once more, but this time, his feelings were earnest.

"Master!"

"Call me young master in the future." Zhang Xuan waved his hand. "Since you have already submitted to me, I will tell you my true identity. In truth, I am a... master teacher!"

"M-m-master teacher?" Dumbstruck, the Violetleaf King nearly fainted on the spot.

He had guessed that the other party could be a poison master or a soul oracle, but the other party was actually telling him that... he was a master teacher?

When in the world did master teachers begin cultivating their souls and immersing themselves in the study of poison as well?

And more importantly, weren't master teachers supposed to be upright and dignified figures who conducted themselves righteously and morally?

When did they become so despicable and shameless, luring him into a scheme and doing him in so badly?

Even if such a person was a master teacher, there was no way he could win the acknowledgement of his peers and the Master Teacher Pavilion!

Just as such thoughts emerged in his mind, the young man before him continued speaking nonchalantly.

"I am the principal of Hongyuan Empire's Master Teacher Academy."

Pu!

Unable to hold himself back anymore, the Violetleaf King spurted a mouthful of blood.

As the passageway was linked to the Subterranean Gallery located in Hongyuan Empire, naturally, he understood the significance of being the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy.

He thought that the principal of a Master Teacher Academy should be a respected and austere old man. Yet, who could have thought that it would turn out to be a shameless and despicable young lad instead... More importantly, the other party was even skilled in the utilization of poison and soul arts, the very occupations scorned by the Master Teacher Pavilion.

Was the Master Teacher Academy blind, or did the eras fly too quickly by for him to catch up with the latest trends?

"Alright, you should continue disguising yourself as a human!" Unaware of the other party's thoughts, Zhang Xuan instructed after he introduced himself.

Due to being pummeled by his Otherworldly Demon puppets, the Violetleaf King inadvertently released his disguise due to the severe injuries he suffered, reverting back to his original form as an Otherworldly Demon.

It was fortunate that they were within a grade-7 Beguilement Formation, so no one was able to see what was going on here. However, if the Violetleaf King were to walk out in such a form, it would indubitably cause a huge pandemonium. To be safe, it would be better for him to maintain his human disguise instead.

"Yes!" The Violetleaf King nodded before reaching his hand for his chest. A brilliant flash of light shrouded his entire body, and a moment later, he reverted back to his human form.

"You depend on this to disguise yourself?" Noting the other party's actions, Zhang Xuan was intrigued.

Unlike him, the other party didn't depend on warping his muscles and bones to disguise himself. Instead, he made use of some kind of unique artifact.

"This is a Button of Disguise which we obtained from offering a tribute to our Spirit God. As long as one possesses bloodline on par with an Otherworldly Demon King, he would be able to activate it and disguise himself impeccably as a human, such that even master teachers wouldn't be able to tell the difference!" the Violetleaf King replied.

"Spirit God?" Noting the unfamiliar term, Zhang Xuan asked with a frown.

This was his first time hearing of such a being.

"Yes, the Spirit God is a deity which our tribesmen worship. It is under the guidance of the Spirit God that we came here!" the Violetleaf King replied.

"You are saying that... it is under the guidance of your god that you found the Master Teacher Continent?"

All along, Zhang Xuan thought that the reason why the Otherworldly Demon was invading the Master Teacher Continent was due to a racial strife. However, from the looks of it now, the matter seemed to be deeply related with the Spirit God the other party spoke about instead.

"Yes, I also only heard of it from the Qingtian Emperor. However, those are matters which have happened ages ago, so there is no way to assess whether they are true or not. However, it is indeed true that we can earn generous rewards by tributing the souls and corpses of master teachers to the Spirit God, and this Button of Disguise was obtained through that method as well." the Violetleaf King explained.

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded. He knew that these matters were still too far away from him, so there was no point brooding over it, especially since the Violetleaf King weren't too sure about them himself either. Thus, he decided to put the matter aside for the moment and continued his interrogation, "Why are you all looking for the Poison Hall?"

If the goal of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was to devastate the human race, they could have just attacked the Hongyuan Empire straight. Why would they bother sending out two Kings and go through so much effort to find the Poison Hall?

"Reporting to young master, we have found an ancient domain which might very well contain an artifact that can help us to break open the seal in the passageway... If we are able to obtain it, our tribesmen will be able to enter the Master Teacher Continent in droves and reclaim the land which we have lost!" the Violetleaf King explained.

"However, that ancient domain is simply too dangerous. A few Kings which we have dispatched previously ended up being trapped within it, unable to escape even to date. After some investigation, we found out that there is a high chance that the Poison Hall may contain a detailed map of the ancient domain... Thus, Qingtian Emperor

dispatched the both of us here to infiltrate the Poison Hall and secure the map!"

"Map? Ancient domain?" Zhang Xuan frowned. Looking deeply into the Violetleaf King's eyes, he asked, "Could the ancient domain you spoke of be at Firesource City?"

The old principal had also been trying to uncover the location of the Poison Hall before he entered the ancient domain. Considering the words that the Violetleaf King had just spoken, could the ancient domain in the other party's mouth be the same one as he was thinking about?

"Un, it is indeed in Firesource City!" the Violetleaf King nodded.

The Violetleaf King instinctively wanted to ask how did his young master know about it, but recalling that the other party was the principal of a Master Teacher Academy, he immediately came to a realization.

If the top brass of mankind didn't even have the sources to acquire such crucial news, the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe would have long breached the defenses of humanity and conquered the Master Teacher Continent. They wouldn't have been trapped in that wretched land to date.

"I see..." Upon hearing the other party's confirmation, Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

If it was an artifact that could break the seal in the Subterranean Gallery open, that would explain why the old principal would head into the ancient domain despite knowing that it was very likely he would not be walking out of there alive.

If the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe were to successfully acquire that artifact, it would spell a huge calamity to mankind.

Chapter 993

Heading to the Poison Hall

After asking for a while longer, it seemed like the Violetleaf King didn't know anything much about the ancient domain in the Firesource City either. Seeing that it was impossible to obtain any more useful information from him, Zhang Xuan shook his head.

At this point, Vicious had also managed to procure information out of the Waterleaf King's Primordial Spirit, and the result was similar to what he had received from the Violetleaf King as well. They were only aware of the existence of the map, and everything other than them was vague.

It was said that when the ancient domain first appeared two thousand years ago, many powers had attempted to vie over the possession of the map. Eventually, it fell into the hands of the Poison Hall.

However, for some reason, the Poison Hall didn't dispatch anyone to search for it. On top of that, the Poison Hall had always been secluded from the rest of the world, so it didn't take long before the news regarding the map to fade from the minds of the world.

It was only through a very thorough investigation did the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe learned of its existence. After much preparation, they finally found a perfect opportunity to dispatch two of their Kings out to search for the map. However, who could have thought that the two powerful Kings they sent would end up being done in by Zhang Xuan before they could even catch a glimpse of the Poison Hall.

"What about the Goldenleaf King and Greenleaf King? What is their motive?"

The motive of the Waterleaf King and Violetleaf King for coming to Jingyuan City was to procure to map, so naturally, the Goldenleaf King and Greenleaf King had to be up to something as well. It was just that they were already killed before they could achieve anything, so up to this point, Zhang Xuan still had no idea what they were planning to do.

"Their motive is to... kill the principal of the Master Teacher Academy, that is to say... you, young master. They hope to create chaos that can divert the attention of the Master Teacher Pavilion away from everything else..." The face of the Violetleaf King reddened as he spoke.

"Kill me?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

He never expected that the goal of the Goldenleaf King and Greenleaf King was to deal with him. It was fortunate that he found them early, or else, if he were to find himself challenged by two Saint 4-dan experts out of the blue, there was a good chance that he might have just died then.

He could already imagine what would happen if the two Kings and the two hundred or so Saint realm Otherworldly Demons were to appear at Hongyuan City. It would definitely stir up a huge mess, and even the Qingyuan Conferred Empire Master Teacher Pavilion would be embroiled into the conflict. By then, there would be no one paying attention to the ancient domain, allowing the Otherworldly Demon to sneak the artifact away easily.

"This..." Looking at the surprised on his young master's face, the Violetleaf King couldn't help but shake his head lamentably.

The Goldenleaf King and Greenleaf King sure had died pitifully.

They were dispatched to kill the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, only to end up being killed by their own target. On top of that, it turned out that their target didn't know anything about it at all. How indignant they would be if they were to learn of it in the afterlife!

"It seems like their deaths aren't unwarranted..." Zhang Xuan remarked meaningfully.

What goes around comes around. Those Otherworldly Demons in the Subterranean Gallery were planning to kill him, only to end up being killed by him instead.

"I have a folded space. You should enter it for the time being!" After asking all of the questions plaguing his mind, Zhang Xuan ushered the Violetleaf King into the Myriad Anthive Nest.

It took him a lot of effort before he could convince Elder Xu that he was a poison master. If the other party were to see him together with the Violetleaf King at this

moment, the trust which he had cultivated painstakingly would shatter immediately, rendering his previous efforts futile.

Thus, it was best for the Violetleaf King to remain hidden for the time being.

Hu!

After keeping the Violetleaf King into the Myriad Anthive Nest, Zhang Xuan tore away the grade-7 Beguilement Formation. At that point, Hu Yunsheng and the others hadn't gone far yet. He instructed for Hu Yunsheng to mobilize the troops of Inkcloud Quarter to take down the guards before writing a letter and arranging for it to be sent to Hongyuan City and its Master Teacher Pavilion.

The collusion between the city lord of Jingyuan City with the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was a matter for Yu Shenqing to frustrate over. It was the other party's call how he would deal with the traitor.

Nevertheless, one thing was for sure. As long as this letter was sent into Yu Shenqing's hands, that arrogant city lord would become a thing of history.

Returning back to the chamber, Zhang Xuan noted that Elder Xu's wounds had mostly recuperated. His condition was much better than before, but his face was still ghastly pale due to the immense damage his soul had sustained earlier.

A thought surfaced in Zhang Xuan's mind, and he swiftly took out a beetle before passing it over, "I went to the City Lord Manor just a moment ago and retrieved this for you."

The beetle was Elder Xu's Lifebound Venomous Bug, and he had been feeding it with his blood essence for many years. It would be a huge loss to Elder Xu if he were to lose it, so Zhang Xuan had the Violetleaf King hand it over after the latter submitted to him.

Thinking back, it seemed like the beetle was also the reason why the Violetleaf King was able to trace them down to Inkcloud Quarter so quickly. Otherwise, considering the huge size of Jingyuan City, there was no reason why they should conduct a search on Inkcloud Quarter first.

"This..." Upon seeing the beetle, a look of agitation surfaced on Elder Xu's face. He hurriedly took the beetle and replied, "Thank you!"

This was his Lifebound Venomous Bug. If it were to die, he would definitely sustain heavy damage. He thought that it would be impossible for him to retrieve it after it fell into the hands of the Saint 4-dan expert. Yet, who could have thought that the man before him would actually risk his life to retrieve it for him!

He couldn't help but feel touched by this gesture.

"Are you injured anywhere?" Keeping the beetle, Elder Xu asked with a concerned tone.

He had witnessed with his own eyes how fearsome that Saint 4-dan expert was. To steal something from the other party's grasp was a deed so difficult that he could hardly fathom it.

"Rest assured, I am fine..." Zhang Xuan said with a gentle smile when his face abruptly paled, and his body staggered.

Spurting a mouthful of fresh blood, Zhang Xuan's body suddenly slumped weakly to the ground, as if having succumbed to the severe injuries it had sustained.

"Ah! Are you fine?" Alarmed, Elder Xu hurriedly rushed forward to help Zhang Xuan. Deep worry could be seen arched in his brows.

To actually put himself in danger to retrieve his beetle, how could he ever thank the other party for this?

More importantly, the other party even claimed that he was uninjured despite having sustained severe injuries for fear that he would worry... This was exactly the type of person which one should befriend and entrust one's back to!

Elder Xu quickly took out a few recovery poison pills and fed it to Zhang Xuan. Seeing the latter's complexion gradually recovering, he heaved a sigh of relief.

"It isn't safe to remain here. We should leave quickly!" After recuperating for a moment, Zhang Xuan exhaled deeply and said.

Elder Xu nodded in agreement.

Had the other party not gone to retrieve his beetle, that Saint 4-dan expert might have thought that the both of them had already escaped far and thin his forces to comb the

surroundings.

But now... the other party definitely knew that they were still at Jingyuan City. With their search area reduced, there was a good chance that they could be found very soon.

"How do you feel at the moment? Do you still need to rest for a while longer?" Elder Xu asked worriedly.

While escaping was important, he couldn't allow the other party's injuries to worsen because of it. Otherwise, he would feel guilty for his entire life.

"It's fine, my injuries are still within a tolerable range. Let's quickly leave this area first. I can slowly recuperate once we reach the Poison Hall!" Clutching his chest, Zhang Xuan spoke strenuously.

"Alright then. Let's prepare to set forth!"

The both of them swiftly planned their route before discreetly making their way out of the chamber. They proceeded stealthily towards the city walls, and not too long later, they managed to make their way out of the city gates.

They stepped into the forest just beyond the city wall and descended into a mountainous valley. Soon after, a massive saint beast appeared before their eyes.

"This is the saint beast of our Poison Hall. Elder Xue and I rode this when we came here earlier..." Speaking up to this point, Elder Xu fell silent for a brief moment as sorrow surfaced in his eyes.

The Elder Xue whom he spoke of was the shorter fellow who was with him back in the City Lord Manor. In order to save him, the other party had stepped forward to face the Violetleaf King's palm strike, resulting in his immediate death.

"Elder Xue gave his life to save you. The best way you can repay his sentiments is to return to the Poison Hall safely." Zhang Xuan consoled.

"Un." Understanding that Zhang Xuan was trying to console him, Elder Xu nodded and fell silent.

The duo got on the saint beast and began making their way towards the Viridian Cloud Sea.

The Viridian Cloud Sea was the largest inland sea of Hongyuan Empire, spanning a diameter exceeding a hundred thousand kilometers. There were many powerful saint beasts whose cultivation reached Saint 3-dan or 4-dan within the sea, making it an extremely dangerous area to explore. As a result, it had always been considered as one of the restricted lands to the cultivators.

The saint beast they were riding on was a Saint 1-dan intermediate stage Steelarmored Winged Dragon. It wasn't particularly adept at speedy maneuvers, but its stamina was top-notch.

After flying for half a day, they finally caught sight of the boundless sea. Staring into the distance, the beautiful blue sky and the emerald seawater seemed to close in on one another, creating a breathtaking painting which harmonized the beauty of heaven and earth as one.

Gazing upon it at extended periods of time would widen one's mind, granting one greater composure and a stronger disposition.

"There are a total of 27 poison formations on the pathway to the Poison Hall. Even a Saint 3-dan cultivator could be easily poisoned to death if he were to attempt to infiltrate the Poison Hall recklessly." Within the wooden hut on top of the aerial saint beast, Elder Xu gazed down at the emerald seawater beneath and remarked.

"27 poison formations?" Zhang Xuan was astonished.

"Indeed. Furthermore, the poisonous formations are located around the dens of the Saint 3-dan saint beasts. Thus, if one were to attempt to avoid the poison formation, one would come under their attack instead. As such, most of the cultivators who sought the Poison Hall ended up dying on the journey there. Even by conservative estimates, there are at least several hundred casualties each year."

At this point, Elder Xu shook his head.

"Several hundred casualties... each year?" Zhang Xuan was astonished.

Those who dared to venture into the Viridian Cloud Sea to search for the Poison Hall were bound to be not too weak themselves, reaching Saint realm at the minimum. Yet, there were actually a few hundred deaths of experts of such calibers each year... While this wasn't the direct doing of the poison masters, it was intricately tied to them.

It was no wonder the occupation was feared throughout the continent, it was indeed a powerful force that one should be careful around.

"But considering how deeply hidden the Poison Hall is, how does it sustain its heritage?" Zhang Xuan asked with a deep frown.

Every occupation needed influxes of new blood to pass down its heritage, but considering how deeply hidden the Poison Hall was, most people wouldn't even be able to find it. Given so, how could they pass down their wisdom to the next generation?"

"Poison masters would usually venture into the world in search of talented individuals to take under their wing. There are also some who would adopt a lot of orphans and expose them to lethal poison from young, and only those who survive at the end of it are qualified to acknowledge the poison master as their teacher." Elder Xu explained.

Zhang Xuan frowned.

That was a method similar to raising gu—placing all of the venomous insects together, allowing them to fight it out. Eventually, the final survivor was the victor.

As orphans, they were bound to have no experience with poison whatsoever. Exposing them to it abruptly was bound to give rise to casualties. How many lives would have to be lost in order to nurture just a handful of poison masters?

"Given that you didn't come from any particular lineage, how did you become a poison master?" After explaining the matter, Elder Xu turned to look at Zhang Xuan and asked doubtfully.

Even those who had inherited the lineage of a poison master was unable to achieve such high resistance to poison. On the other hand, the man before him had never been to the Poison Hall, and yet, he had achieved a feat which most poison masters were unable to accomplish. Just how did he do so?

"Actually... I have been to a Poison Hall before, but it isn't this one. It is a branch located in a remote location under Xuanyuan Kingdom called the Red Lotus Mountain Ridge... After I left the area, I began exploring the world, and by a stroke of coincidence, I happened to obtain a secret manual regarding the Way of Poison. Studying it carefully, I eventually became who I am today..." Zhang Xuan casually replied.

If he were to say that he had never come into contact with poison masters and yet achieved such mastery in the Way of Poison, the story would be too inconceivable for anyone to believe. Thus, he mixed truth and falsehood within the words, making it difficult for the other party to discern the authenticity of it.

"A secret manual regarding the Way of Poison? To be able to grant you such astounding capability, it must be a rather powerful secret manual!" Elder Xu complimented before turning his gaze towards Zhang Xuan. "Will it be convenient for you to allow me to look at the secret manual you spoke of? Rest assured, I won't open it. I am just curious to see which master did the book come from!"

"This..." Zhang Xuan's lips twitched.

He was just making things up on the spot, so how could he have any secret manual of that sort?

But for the other party to be asking such a question... could it be that the other party still harbored doubts regarding his identity?

Chapter 994

The Poison Master Examination

"It's fine if it isn't convenient for you..." Noticing the look of distress on the other party's face, Elder Xu shook his head.

"It is not that it is inconvenient, but that it isn't my place to be spreading the heritage around... How about this? Why don't I detail the 1-star and 2-star fundamental knowledge to you instead so that you can fathom the origin of the secret manual through it?" Seeing that the other party was just posing it as a casual question and not to investigate his origins, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

He didn't have the secret manual, and his knowledge of poison was still capped at 2-star. The only reason why he seemed fearsome in the eyes of the other party was due to his Heaven's Path zhenqi, which granted him near complete immunity to poisons.

As such, he could be considered to be an amateur to poison. Nevertheless, if it was just fundamental knowledge of 2-star and below, he was confident that there was no one who could rival him.

"That would be great!" Elder Xu's eyes lit up.

Lineage was extremely important in the Master Teacher Academy, so it was indeed inconvenient for the other party to expose his heritage to an outsider.

It was understandable why the other party was unwilling to speak anymore about that. As for knowledge of 2-star and below, as it involved only the fundamental knowledge of poison, there was no harm to sharing them.

"Based on the explanation of the book, poison can be viewed as a medicine of one kind as well. To put it simply, it is used to complement the Yin-yang and Five Elements of the human body. As long as one achieves a balance in the Five Elements, one will be able to develop an immunity to all poisons..."

Recalling the 1-star and 2-star Heaven's Path Poison Art, Zhang Xuan began to speak.

"T-this..."

Elder Xu initially thought that there couldn't possibly be anything new to the fundamentals, but as he listened on, his face gradually warped in astonishment. Gripped by agitation, his entire body began trembling, and his breathing hastened.

The other party had reshaped the understanding of poison through the concept of Yin-yang and the Five Elements, and through it, he was able to theorize the concept of poison immunity.

It was possible to poison a person to death, but was it possible to poison the heavens to death?

The fundamental knowledge that the other party spoke of was directed towards the very essence of poison itself. As long as one were to cultivate according to it, it was almost certain that one would be able to forge the Poison Body.

Even though it was already too late for him to switch his cultivation technique, he could already foresee the huge uproar it would cause in the Poison Hall should this piece of knowledge ever be made public.

"Poison can be a tonic as well. It can save and can treat. As long as one were to use it well, it can definitely become a valuable tool to the world..." Zhang Xuan continued speaking.

The more he listened, the deeper a trance Elder Xu found himself falling into.

The main reason why poison masters was so widely feared was due to their ability to plant poison discreetly, making it extremely difficult for an average cultivator to guard against them. However, if their poison really could make a positive contribution to the world, just like what the other party had said, it might be possible for the Poison Hall to walk out of its isolation and stand openly on the Master Teacher Continent once more. They could come under the protection of the Master Teacher Pavilion, and they wouldn't be shunned and snubbed by the world as they were now.

With such thoughts in mind, Elder Xu subconsciously turned to look at Sun Qiang with a look of agitation on his face.

"Alright, this is all I have understood from it..."

After casually sharing some of the knowledge of poison that he possessed, Zhang Xuan finally came to a halt. Lifting his gaze, he noticed that Elder Xu was looking at him with a fiery gaze. Alarmed, he quickly glanced downward at his clothes, but... nothing was open!

If nothing is open, what are you getting agitated over?

It can't be that your sexual orientation has changed from listening to a lecture?

It doesn't seem like there is any master teacher in the world who possesses such an ability!

"Cough cough!" Noticing Zhang Xuan's actions, Elder Xu knew that he had acted inappropriately for a moment there. He adjusted his expression before continuing with a grim look, "Poison Master Sun, the secret manual that you have is simply too astounding. It will be best for you to keep its existence hidden from the others, or else, I fear that... you might meet with danger!"

Which poison master didn't dream of a body that boasted high resistance to poison? Which poison master didn't hope to concoct an even more potent poison?

If the other poison masters were to learn that the man before him had such a formidable secret manual in his possession, they surely wouldn't hesitate to resort to all kinds of underhanded means to obtain it, thus putting the other party in grave danger.

Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

Unlike master teachers, poison masters had no regards for rules and morals. If they were to learn of the existence of the secret manual, they might even attempt to snatch it in broad daylight.

Nevertheless, Zhang Xuan had no fear.

The main reason why he wanted to head to the Poison Hall was to collect books regarding poison and save Wei Ruyan. If the poison masters knew that was best for them, he could still consider getting along with them.

Otherwise, he didn't mind teaching the other party the meaning of fear.

After a moment of hesitation, Elder Xu added, "You should conceal your poison-resistant constitution as well. Make sure not to show it to anyone easily. Otherwise, you might be stoking their greed!"

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded.

While he didn't possess the Innate Poison Body, his ability to neutralize most poisons was indeed something that would interest most poison masters, if not all. Others could very well go after him in hopes of uncovering his secrets and cultivating the same poison-resistant constitution for themselves. For this reason, it would be best for him to maintain a low profile at the Poison Hall.

In any case, this happened to work in his favor. He was a humble person at heart, and he never liked to boast to others anyway.

"I intend to take the poison master examination later on at the Poison Hall, but I'm not too sure how it is conducted there. Can you shed some light on the matter for me? Also, will I be able to access all of the books in the Poison Hall if I were to clear the examination?" After chatting for a while longer, Zhang Xuan asked.

His main goal at the Poison Hall was to collect all of the books on poison there, so naturally, that was also the matter that he was the most concerned about.

"The poison master examination at our branch is slightly different from that of the others. Rather than the typical concoction of poison, the crux of our examination lies in... poisoning!" Elder Xu said.

"Poisoning?" Zhang Xuan was perplexed.

"Indeed. The ability to concoct potent poison is formidable, but what that makes a truly great poison master is his ability to poison a person whose cultivation realm is equal or even greater than him discreetly!" Elder Xu explained.

"Are you saying that the poison master examination will come in the form of a poisoning match?"

"That's right. For the 6-star poison master examination, the examinee will be challenging a 6-star poison master. The examiner would be fighting with his full strength as well, and if the examinee is able to wound the examiner through his poison, he would be considered to have cleared the examination!" Elder Xu explained.

"But poison... it shouldn't be easy to control it in combat, right? What will happen if one side accidentally poisons the other to death?" Zhang Xuan frowned in bewilderment.

Precise control was required to wound an opponent without dealing lethal damage, and this was something extremely difficult to control in combat. Use too little poison, and it might end up being ineffective. Use too much, and one could accidentally kill one's opponent. Given so... wasn't it a little too risky to conduct such an examination?

"If one were to be poisoned to death in the midst of the examination, it can only mean that he hasn't worked hard enough in his studies. He has no one but himself to blame!" Elder Xu shook his head and sighed. "This is simply how things work here!"

Not expecting that the poison master examination would be so risky, Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly. A moment later, he asked, "May I trouble Elder Xu to fill me in on the situation in the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall?"

At the current moment, he knew nothing about the Poison Hall at all. If he could learn a thing or two about it, he would be more well-prepared for whatever he would face there.

"Of course, that's nothing much to ask of!" Elder Xu chuckled.

"The Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall branch is in fact a grade-7 branch. We have a 7-star poison master as our hall master, and this means that it is possible to take the 7-star poison master examination at our branch. If one can defeat the hall master in a poison match, one will be qualified to become a 7-star poison master immediately.

"Other than the hall master, the Poison Hall also has three 7-star vice hall master, as well as twenty-two 6-star pinnacle elders. Elder Xue and I are amongst the twenty-two 6-star pinnacle elders.

"As for poison masters below 6-star, there should be at least several dozen thousand of them."

'Several dozen thousand?' Zhang Xuan was stunned.

The utilization of poison could be considered to be an unorthodox art, so he thought that there wouldn't be too many poison masters in the world. Yet, who could have thought that just this single branch would have numbers nearly on par with the

Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy!

It was fortunate that they had chosen to isolate themselves at Jingyuan City. Otherwise, their presence could easily bring unease or even chaos upon the entire Hongyuan Empire!

"The Poison Hall is known for its Three Great Halls. The first hall is the Compendium Hall, which boasts a huge collection of books accumulated over the past ten thousand years. Most who wished to advance as a poison master would devote most of their time to studying the books in there.

"The second hall is the Poison Experimentation Hall. Researching and practicing the concoction of poison require a vast amount of medicinal herbs. If one were to work with real herbs each time, even a mountain of medicinal herbs could be easily depleted within days. Within the Poison Experimentation Hall is a unique formation which could accurately simulate the unique properties of each medicinal herb. Through experimenting with the herbs here, one could lessen the wastage of herbs!

"The last one is the Sparring Hall! Just like with most other occupations, poison masters who have an irreconcilable conflict with one another would head there and settle it through a life-and-death duel. While it was named the Sparring Hall, it was also the location where many poison masters had died!" Elder Xu shook his head.

"Other than the Three Great Halls, there is also the Two Forbidden Grounds. One of them is the Mausoleum of Hall Masters. It is the location where the the hall masters of every generation rested. Only the incumbent hall master was allowed to enter the grounds, and anyone else who tried to circumvent the rule would find themselves being poisoned to death! The other forbidden ground is the herb fields. Planted in the fields are the medicinal herbs used in the Poison Hall, and they are strictly controlled. Anyone who needs any medicinal herb must apply for it beforehand. No one was allowed to enter it casually, or else death would be what they would face!

"Other than that, there is nothing else. Given your strength and your immunity to poison, there should be nothing for you to worry about..."

'Un." Zhang Xuan nodded.

7-star master teacher, Three Great Halls, and the Two Forbidden Grounds...

Since he was intending to only go through the books of the Poison Hall, he would

probably only pay a visit to the Compendium Hall and go nowhere else.

"Actually, the Poison Hall isn't as frightening as others put it out to be. As fellow poison masters, everyone actually treats one another rather amiably... Not to mention, you are my savior on top of that!" Elder Xu said with a kind smile.

The Poison Hall might seem like an incomparably frightening existence in the eyes of others, but internally, they still got along with one another harmoniously.

While fellow friends might occasionally spike each other's drinks or something, they would usually prepare the antidote beforehand, so no permanent harm would be done.

Zhang Xuan continued asking on several matters concerning the Poison Hall, and Elder Xu, seemingly convinced that he was a real poison master, didn't hide anything from him at all.

Half a day later, Zhang Xuan finally gained a deep insight into the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall.

While it was located within the territory of Hongyuan Empire, it was in truth the largest and most formidable Poison Hall in Qingyuan Conferred Empire. This was also the reason why there were multiple 7-star poison masters holding the fort there.

The Poison Hall was also a really dangerous place for the average cultivator. Not only were there poison masters and poisonous herbs, there were even poisonous worms, poisonous plants, and even the drinking water itself was poisoned... Had it been anyone else, Elder Xu would have surely made sure to warn them sternly beforehand. However, the man before him was no average cultivator. He was an existence who could munch of grade-6 pinnacle poisons as if they were mere snacks.

In any case, he was certain that the other party couldn't possibly be poisoned to death, so there was nothing to warn him about.

"Alright, we are arriving at the Poison Hall..."

After flying for two days straight, Elder Xu abruptly stood up and pointed forward. Turning his gaze over as well, Zhang Xuan saw the boundless blue ocean with a brilliant sun hanging at the horizon.

In the next moment, the saint beast twisted its body slightly, and the sight before him cleared up. A massive island abruptly came into sight.

To Zhang Xuan's astonishment, the island was actually concealed by a massive Hidden Formation. Had it not been for Elder Xu leading him here, it was very likely that he might have never found the Poison Hall.

Chapter 995

Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall

The island had a diameter of around a hundred kilometers. From afar, Zhang Xuan could see that it was filled with all kinds of towering plants, granting it a lush appearance. Surrounded by a massive formation, the spiritual energy within was particularly concentrated, and from time to time, one could see formidable saint beasts dancing in the air above.

"To be able to conceal an island with a diameter of hundred kilometers, the man who set up the formation must be at least a 7-star formation master!" Zhang Xuan noted in astonishment.

He was currently a 6-star pinnacle formation master, but even so, a formation of such scale was still far beyond his means. Just how powerful must the senior who had built the Poison Hall here be?

"The founder of the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall wasn't only a 7-star poison master, he was a 7-star pinnacle formation master as well. Even so, he had still spent an entire fifty years to construct this massive Hidden Formation!" Noticing Zhang Xuan's shock, Elder Xu explained with a smile.

"Fifty years?" Zhang Xuan's lips twitched in astonishment.

Not even a single year had passed since his transcension until now. To spend an entire fifty years just to construct a formation... this was something that Zhang Xuan would never do.

"That's right. This formation taps on the volcano beneath it as its energy source, concealing the entire island amidst the vast sea. If one couldn't locate the proper entrance, all one would see was just yet another plot of empty sea while flying over it." Elder Xu said proudly.

"Over the years, many 7-star master teachers and formation masters had flew across this land, but none of them had noticed the Poison Hall here. It is due to this that the Poison Hall was able to retain its complete heritage even after ten thousand years,

never having suffered an attack before."

"Incredible!" Zhang Xuan nodded. Activating his Eye of Insight, he assessed the formation before him.

He had to admit that the design of the formation was indeed exquisite. The Hidden Formation was constructed through making use of the unique geographical advantage of the island, making it perfectly harmonized with its surroundings. Even via his Eye of Insight, he could barely make out the existence of the formation. It would be hard for him to decipher the formation within a short period of time.

If he really wanted to break the formation, it would take him around... ten minutes!

A formation that would take him so long to decipher could already be considered to be extremely powerful.

"Let's head down!" Noticing the stunned look in Zhang Xuan's eyes, Elder Xu chuckled as he drove the aerial saint beast down upon the island.

Around ten minutes later, they landed on a massive elevated platform.

"Elder Xu!" A few youngsters rushed up to welcome the returning Elder Xu. However, when they saw that it was a middle-aged man whom they had never seen before instead of Elder Xue who walked out of the wooden hut, they were bewildered for a moment.

"Poison Master Sun here is my savior. Prepare an accommodation for him." Elder Xu instructed. "I will be seeking an audience with the hall master now!"

"Yes!" Hearing that the other party was Elder Xu's savior, a gleam of admiration surfaced in the eyes of the youngsters as they nodded hurriedly.

"Poison Master Sun, they will lead you to your accommodation to rest. I need to meet the hall master first to report the happenings earlier at Jingyuan City to him."

After which, Elder Xu took two steps forward before halting once more. Without turning his head around, he sent a telepathic message to Zhang Xuan, "The members of the Poison Hall could have a rather bad temper. However, they do admire the strong, so there is no need for you to hold back should anyone attempt to provoke you."

"Got it." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Considering that one of the elders of the Poison Hall was killed, this matter should indeed be reported to the hall master as soon as possible.

And it went without saying that he had no intentions to be a samaritan should anyone try to step over his head too.

"I will report your matter to the hall master as well and apply a slot in the poison master examination for you." Elder Xu added before hurriedly heading off.

A moment later, he had already disappeared in the distance.

"Poison Master Sun, this way please!" Seeing that Elder Xu had left, the youngsters stepped forward and gestured to Zhang Xuan.

Without wasting a word, Zhang Xuan followed behind them.

Shortly after leaving the elevated platform, a massive town unfolded before his eyes. Innumerable buildings of differing heights could be seen here and there. However, the architecture was rather ancient, seemingly having thousands of years to them.

A bustling crowd moved to and fro the streets, doing everything that one could think of. In a sense, it was truly no different from a huge city.

Walking amongst the crowd, Zhang Xuan could occasionally see a light mist drifting out from the cracks in the windows and doors of several houses. It had a pleasant smell to it, but it seemed to fill one with lethargy, inducing one to a deep sleep.

There was no doubt about it, the mist definitely contained poison.

That wasn't the only peculiarity that Zhang Xuan noticed. From time to time, he would see poisonous bugs and snakes with bright, glistening colors glaring at the passers-by with a menacing gaze, seemingly ready to strike at any moment. The faint-hearted would probably be frightened unconscious on the spot upon seeing this sight.

"Don't worry, these poisonous snakes don't bite easily..." As if noting the apprehension on Zhang Xuan's face, one of the young men explained with a smile. At that moment, however, a scream of agony suddenly sounded in front. A middle-aged man was running forward frenziedly, and taking a closer look, there was a poisonous snake

hanging off his bottom. Its sharp fangs were sunk deep into the middle-aged man's flesh, refusing to let go no matter how forcefully the other party struggled.

"Screw this shit, whose snake is this? If no one dares to own up, I will skin this bastard alive today!"

Soon after, another bellow sounded from the crowd, "Try to eat my snake, and I will have you poisoned to death right here right now!"

A figure flitted out from the crowd and began crossing hands with the middle-aged man who was bitten by the snake.

"T-this... It's just a coincidence. These poisonous snakes and bugs are usually rather friendly..." Meeting with this sight right after saying that the poisonous snakes wouldn't bite, the young man scratched his head in embarrassment.

He hurriedly tried to reassure the guest who he was escorting, "Even though these bugs might attack one another from time to time, there is no need to worry. We, poison masters, are a harmonious community. We respect one another and promote neighborliness, so rarely will there be any fights breaking out!"

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded.

However, before they could take another step forward, an even louder scream sounded.

"Which screwed up bugger poisoned my pillow? You better pray that I don't find out who you are because you can be heck sure that I will skin you alive when I do!"

Right afterward, a young lady with a round face darted out from one of the doors.

The young lady had a beautiful figure, but her face was swollen as though a watermelon. There were even quite a few parts which had pus flowing out. Her appearance was truly as hideous as a zombie who had climbed out from its grave.

"Which idiot spiked my porridge?"

"To dare to plant a poisonous bug in my shoes, you must be tired of living!"

"Stuffing medicine in my nostrils? You must be asking me to chop off your hands!"

...

Such voices sounded relentlessly in the surroundings. Following which, one by one, victims whose appearances were disfigured in all kinds of ways rushed out from their rooms.

The face of the young man who had just said that the poison masters promoted neighborliness reddened in awkwardness.

"Cough cough. They are just jesting with one another, so you don't have to worry about that! They are just testing out the poisons that they have just concocted, so you can think of it more like a prank. It's really harmless actually..."

"Harmless? Then, that is..." With a perplexed look, Zhang Xuan pointed in a certain direction. There, two poison masters who were fighting intensely with one another, seemingly unwilling to rest until one side had fallen dead.

"..." The young man.

After walking through the streets for a moment longer, Zhang Xuan gained an understanding of the prevalent culture in the Poison Hall.

Unlike the Master Teacher Pavilion, the Poison Hall didn't have many rules. Whenever a poison master succeeded in formulating a new poison, they would usually try it on those around them. Appearances were something that commonly changed within this city. A person could look this way yesterday but assume a vastly different appearance tomorrow. In fact, there had even been cases where one's gender had changed due to the side effect of some poison...

In other words, your neighbor could very well be an elderly man today, a middle-aged man tomorrow, a ravishing young lady the day after tomorrow, and perhaps even a monstrous behemoth the day after the day after tomorrow...

But of course, if you were to ask the other party's name, you would find out that 'they' were all the same person all along. It was just due to the consumption of bizarre poisons that resulted in the continuous warping of his form.

"It's fortunate that they are all on this island. If the poison masters were to do the same in Hongyuan City, it will only be a matter of time before they are pummeled to death..." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

It was probably only on this land could they do something as ridiculous as this. Hongyuan City had a Master Teacher Pavilion and Master Teacher Academy to uphold order, and willfully poisoning another in such a manner was against the rules. Should one be caught doing so, even ten lives wouldn't be sufficient to amend for one's sin.

How could Elder Xu bring himself to say with a straight face that the poison masters were an amiable bunch when such was the chaos here... To live in fear, not knowing who would poison one or who one would turn into the next day... This sure wasn't his definition of amiable!

"Alright, Poison Master Sun. This is your accommodation!" After walking a while further and seeing bizarre acts of all kinds, the young man finally came to a halt.

Taking a look at his accommodation, it was decently clean residence. While the building looked a little old, the surroundings were rather tranquil and peaceful.

"Alright!" Knowing that he wouldn't stay here for too long, there was no need for him to get picky about it.

Just as Zhang Xuan was about to push open the door to enter, a few young men suddenly walked over.

"Li Yuan, this person looks very unfamiliar. I don't think I have seen him around before."

"He is a guest whom Elder Xu just brought in from outside." Li Yuan, the young man who had brought Zhang Xuan over, replied.

"Elder Xu brought him here? Could it be that he intends to take that person as his disciple? To be able to move that obstinate old fogey's heart, his talent must be spectacular. Let me see how capable he is..." the other young man chuckled.

He snapped his fingers, and a surge of smoke suddenly gushed in Zhang Xuan's direction.

"Liu Xu, don't mess around. Poison Master Sun isn't Elder Xu's disciple." Li Yuan explained. However, before he could finish his words, the smoke had already reached Zhang Xuan, giving him no time to stop the latter at all.

Just as he was about to exclaim for the middle-aged man before him to be careful, he

suddenly noticed a hint of a smile from the corners of the latter's cheek. The next moment, his silhouette vanished like a phantom and materialized right before Liu Xu.

Peng!

The crisp sound of bones shattering echoed resoundingly in the air. Before Liu Xu could even cry in agony, he was already sent flying before eventually ending up being hung on the branch of a nearby tree, passed out.

"Ah..." Everyone was dumbstruck.

As fellow poison masters, if an individual were to be attacked by poison, he should retaliate in the same manner. Yet, this fellow actually sent the other party flying with a single punch... How violent!

"You... As a poison master, how can you resolve matters with violence? Just how crass can you get?" A young man behind Liu Xu stepped forward and waved his hands righteously, "I shall challenge you to a poison duel right now. Do you dare to acce..."

But before he could finish his words, a foot was already planted in his face.

Peng!

Just like Liu Xu, before the young man could utter a word, he was sent flying and eventually ended up being hung on a nearby tree branch as well.

"You..." The faces of the remaining young men warped in fury. Their companion had already challenged the other party to a poison duel, but the other party still continued to attack them with brute force.

"Let's make a move together!" One of the young men exclaimed.

Peng peng peng peng!

...

A few breaths later, the energetic young men from a moment ago were lying unconscious on the tree not too far away.

"This..."

Li Yuan and the others who had escorted Zhang Xuan over were flabbergasted.

Chapter 996

Sneaking In (1)

One's ability to utilize poison had always been used to determine one's standing in the Poison Hall, so naturally, the duels conducted were usually centered around the utilization of poison as well. Yet, the fellow before them actually sent them flying with his fists and kicks without any hesitation... How could there be a person as violent as him?

"Poison Master Sun, you... you are really too reckless!"

Upon recovering from his daze, Li Yuan suddenly recalled a matter, and his complexion darkened. "They are the subordinates of Senior Duan Ren, so if you were to injure them, the latter will surely be displeased..."

"Indeed! Senior Duan has always been biased towards those whom he was close with, and he had an explosive temper as well. Those who had offended him never ended well..." Another young man added with an awful look on his face.

Had Poison Master Sun held himself back, the most that could have happened was for him to be poisoned for a brief moment, and the matter could have passed just like that. Yet, Poison Master Sun actually beat the other party up to such a state... Senior Duan was bound to be displeased. If Senior Duan were to exact vengeance for his brothers, who could possibly stop him?

"Senior Duan?" Seeing how frightened the young men were, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but ask curiously.

"Senior Duan Ren is Vice Hall Master Ming Zhen's direct disciple, and he is a 6-star poison master possessing the cultivation of Saint 1-dan advanced stage... He is considered the strongest poison master in his generation, and all of us have to address him respectfully as our senior. Liu Xu, whom you have just beat up, is his most loyal subordinate!" Li Yuan hurriedly explained.

The hall master and the elders were the most senior generation in the Poison Hall at the moment, and their disciples and students were all considered to be in the second

generation.

But despite being in the same generation, Duan Ren was leading far in front of the others, to a point where the others could only look on in admiration.

"A Saint 1-dan advanced stage 6-star master teacher? Is he going to take it out on me just because of a subordinate?" Seeing how frightened the others were, Zhang Xuan shook his head.

No matter how unreasonable the other party may be, surely he had to at least give some respect to Elder Xu!

Elder Xu was amongst the most senior generation in the Poison Hall, and he was Elder Xu's savior. Duan Ren might be arrogant, but as a junior, surely he wouldn't risk getting on Elder Xu's bad side just over a mere subordinate?

"Poison Master Sun, I am really not exaggerating the matter. There was one incident in the past where Liu Xu had acted disrespectfully to Senior Wu Haiyuan, so Senior Wu Haiyuan taught him a lesson. Upon learning of the matter, Senior Duan flew into a rage and poisoned him mute. Even to this day, Senior Wu Haiyuan is still unable to utter a single word..." With a tearful face, Li Yuan hurriedly explained.

"Senior Wu Haiyuan is a 6-star poison master, and his cultivation has reached a staggering Saint 1-dan..."

"There's such a matter?" Zhang Xuan was bewildered. With a doubtful look, he asked, "To offend a fellow 6-star master teacher over a mere subordinate, isn't that very reckless of him?"

It was no wonder why Zhang Xuan found it hard to believe this matter.

He had taken a look at Liu Xu earlier, and the latter was only a Transcendent Mortal 8-dan Ethereal Treading realm cultivator. Most likely, he was only a 5-star poison master as well. There were plenty of those who could rival him easily in the Poison Hall, so it shouldn't be too difficult to find another person to replace Liu Xu as his subordinate. To offend a fellow 6-star poison master over this fellow... Wasn't Senior Duan needlessly bringing himself enemies for no good reason?

"This..." Hearing those words, Li Yuan hesitated for a moment, and eventually, gritting his teeth tightly, he said, "As a newcomer, it is not surprising that you are unaware of

it, but... Liu Xu isn't just Senior Duan's subordinate. He is also Senior Duan... gigolo!"

"Gigolo?" Zhang Xuan was perplexed. "Senior Duan... is a lady?"

Gigolo referred to men who were financially supported by a woman to become her escort. Could it be that the Duan Ren person they had been talking about all along was a lady?

The other party had been addressing Duan Ren with 'he' all along, so he had assumed that Duan Ren was a male. Perhaps he might have just misheard him.

Nevertheless, considering how ugly Liu Xu was, just how bad could that Duan Ren's eyesight be?

"Senior Duan Ren... is a male!" Li Yuan said with an incredibly awkward expression on his face. "Due to consuming too much poison, his sexual orientation has changed as well..."

"Cough cough!" Zhang Xuan choked on his saliva.

He could have never thought that Duan Ren was a homosexual!

However, thinking about it once more, it wasn't really too surprising.

Poison masters spent their days alongside poison, and to concoct potent poisons, they might sometimes opt to try the poisons out of themselves... Putting aside changing one's sexual orientation, it wouldn't be impossible for one to fall in love with spirit beasts, saint beasts, trees, or even rocks and plants.

Also, there were poisons which could induce hallucinations. Even though Liu Xu looked incredibly ugly to him, there was no saying that the other party might be a huge beauty in Senior Duan's eyes.

"That's right. Such situations aren't too uncommon here. Senior Duan will surely fly into a rage if he were to learn that you have beat his gigolo up. If he were to come and get even with you... that will be a huge disaster!" Li Yuan said worriedly.

There was no one in the Poison Hall who was unaware of how fearsome Senior Duan was. This was precisely the reason why no one dared to offend him. Yet, this fellow actually beat Liu Xu up to such a state without any warning... There was no way to

resolve the conflict peacefully anymore.

Even though Elder Xu could be considered to be a senior to Senior Duan, he was also only a 6-star master teacher, so there wasn't too huge of a gap between their standings. Furthermore, the latter could very well become an elder if he could advance his capability a step further, thus putting the both of them on equal standings.

"If he wishes to come for me, so be it!" Stretching his back lazily, Zhang Xuan replied leisurely.

What Senior Duan or something, he couldn't care less about it.

If the other party intended to cause him trouble, he didn't mind releasing the Violetleaf King and stir up a huge mess within the Poison Hall.

In any case, he had already found the Poison Hall, and the Compendium Hall was located just a walk away. There was no need for him to pretend to be a samaritan to a bunch of fellows who only thought about poisoning others every single day.

"But..." Seeing how laidback Zhang Xuan was, Li Yuan and the others glanced at one another and smiled bitterly. They were at a complete loss as to what to do.

At that moment, a young man with an incredibly awful look on his face walked over with widened strides.

Upon seeing the young man, the faces of Li Yuan and the others immediately warped in fear, "Senior Duan..."

Speak of the devil!

The accommodation prepared for Zhang Xuan might be peaceful, but there were still quite a handful of men in the vicinity when Poison Master Sun sent Liu Xu flying with a punch. News spread swiftly, and it didn't take long for Senior Duan Ren to learn of it and rush over.

Doomed... It was already too late to escape at this point.

Hu!

Swiftly walking forward, Senior Duan Ren leaped up and carried Liu Xu down from the

tree branch. He carefully fed the latter some pills with an frighteningly chilling look on his face.

"Senior Duan, I challenged that fellow to a poison duel, but he assaulted me instead... I beg of you to redress my grievance!" Upon coming to, Liu Xu raised his finger and pointed it at Zhang Xuan with gritted teeth.

"Don't worry!" With narrowed eyes, Duan Ren stood up and glared at Zhang Xuan coldly, the killing intent in his eyes flaring furiously, "I will make him pay the price!"

"Senior Duan, Poison Master Sun over here is Elder Xu's savior..." Seeing that the situation was heading down a very dangerous path, Li Yuan clenched his jaws in determination before hurrying forward to explain.

Elder Xu had entrusted the other party to them, so they had to take care of him well. If the other party were to be poisoned to death right after arriving at the accommodation, they would have to take responsibility for his mishap as well.

"Scram!" Duan Ren roared furiously.

Deng deng deng deng!

A powerful shock wave surged forth from Duan Ren. Li Yuan's face paled, and he was knocked back eight steps before spurting a mouthful of blood.

Possessing only the cultivation of Ethereal Treading realm, he was completely no match for a Saint realm expert like the other party.

I don't care how you are related to Elder Xu or anyone else. Anyone who dares to hurt my man has to pay the price!" Duan Ren stomped forward and glared at Zhang Xuan with wintry eyes. "I will give you two choices now. You can either kneel down and apologize to Liu Xu right now, and allow him to do whatever he wants to do to you, or I will make a move personally and show you what a living hell looks like..."

There was no one who didn't know that Liu Xu was his gigolo, and yet, this fellow still dared to lay his hands on his man. This was a blatant disregard for him. If he didn't teach the other party a lesson, how was he going to establish his authority within the Poison Hall?

"Interesting. What if I choose neither of them?" Zhang Xuan said with a wry smile.

It was no wonder why Elder Xu said that the Poison Hall wasn't peaceful and told him to be careful. From the looks of it now, that was indeed the case.

There were simply far too many fools who overestimated themselves here...

He was planning to keep a low profile here, but looking at the other party's punch-seeking face... It seemed like he would be letting himself down if he didn't give it a good one!

"Choose neither of them? You are seeking death!" With a fearsome roar, Duan Ren leaped forward, and with swiftness reminiscent of a streak of lightning, he appeared before Zhang Xuan at the very next instant. Clenching his fingers into claws, Duan Ren swiped at the middle-aged man before him.

A powerful surge of zhenqi burst from his fingertips. At the same time, a unique powder cloaked the air before him.

This powder was a lethal poison which he had spent great effort developing and concocting. Even a Saint 1-dan pinnacle expert would succumb just by coming into contact with a tinge of it.

"Hah!" Facing the other party's surge of zhenqi and poison powder, Zhang Xuan shook his head with a pitying look in his eyes.

Hu!

He raised his palm and sent a direct slap towards the other party, not even bothering to utilize any battle technique at all.

Facing Zhang Xuan's attack, Duan Ren sneered in disdain. However, in the next moment, his eyes abruptly narrowed in astonishment, and he hurriedly gathered the full strength in his body into his hands to block the seemingly simple slap.

However, he was too late. Just like Liu Xu, before he could even let out a scream of agony, he fell atop one of the tree branches and fainted.

Zhang Xuan's current cultivation might only be Nascent Saint pinnacle, but not even the Saint 2-dan Liao Song was a match for him. For this Duan Ren guy, a mere Saint 1-dan advanced stage, to challenge him, the other party was truly seeking death. It would take nothing more than a mere snap of fingers for him to destroy the other party.

"This..." The faces of Li Yuan and the others paled, and their bodies began shivering.

This was way too frightening!

They were well-aware of Senior Duan Ren's strength, having witnessed it themselves. Paired with his poison, not even a Saint 2-dan primary stage cultivator would dare to fight him face-on. Yet, this Poison Master Sun actually knocked Senior Duan Ren out with a single slap...

Just how powerful could he be?

"Alright, I will be heading in to rest now!" Couldn't be bothered to explain the matter to the others, Zhang Xuan waved his hand before shooting a glance at Li Yuan. "If anyone still wants to provoke me, make sure to report it to me beforehand!"

Leaving those words behind, he stepped into the residence.

"Yes..." With twitching lips, Li Yuan and the others quickly nodded.

...

After entering the residence, Zhang Xuan closed the door and swiftly located the area where spiritual energy seemed to converge towards before taking a seat.

"Since I am already at the Poison Hall, I should quickly finish reading the books and find a way to save Wei Ruyan. This matter mustn't be stalled for any longer!"

Even though he had stabilized Wei Ruyan's condition for the time being, every second wasted meant an additional second of danger for her. Since it was the Poison Hall that he was in, there was no need for him to bother about the rules of the Master Teacher Pavilion. The important matter at hand was to swiftly finish reading those books and analyze a plausible solution to treating Wei Ruyan.

Hu!

With a thought, Zhang Xuan's soul slipped out from his body.

He wouldn't be allowed to access the books in the Compendium Hall until he took the poison master examination, so there was no way he could march there in his body openly. In any case, it was equally efficient for him to read in his soul form as well, so

there was no need to delay this matter any further.

With a slight movement, Zhang Xuan flew into the air.

It was still the day, but as a practitioner of the Heaven's Path Soul Art, he was unaffected by the yang energy of the sun rays. On top of that, after sharing soul essence with Wei Ruyan's soul, his soul had gained a certain immunity to poison. As such, the poisonous gas shrouding around the island was completely ineffective towards him.

After flying a decent altitude high, Zhang Xuan lowered his head to get a bird's eye view of the entire city.

"Elder Xu said that the Compendium Hall is one of the Three Great Halls of the Poison Hall. Naturally, it should be the highest and grandest building here..."

Sweeping his surroundings with the Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan soon caught sight of three particularly towering halls in the area.

Chapter 997

Sneaking In (2)

The three halls were around seventy meters tall each, and they towered above the other buildings in the area, making them particularly conspicuous.

"Poison Experimentation Hall, Sparring Hall, and Compendium Hall... The first two are areas where poisons are frequently utilized, so no matter how they are cleaned, there are bound to be traces left behind... As for the Compendium Hall, considering that it is a location where books are stored, the usage of poisons should be restricted there..."

The Poison Experimentation Hall was a ground for poison masters to practice the concoction of poison. It was inevitable that there would be lingering traces of poison even if one were to attempt to neutralize it with the corresponding antidotes. The same applied for the Sparring Hall as well. As poison masters clashed with one another, it was inevitable that poison would be spilled in the surroundings, leaving behind many unerasable scars on the building. Using this as a gauge, it shouldn't be too difficult to determine which was the Compendium Pavilion.

With such thoughts in mind, Zhang Xuan began to examine the Three Great Halls carefully.

Under the sharp glint of his Eye of Insight, the interiors of the three halls appeared clearly before his eyes. Indeed, two of the halls felt incredibly turbid, as if they were plagued with poison.

"That should be the Compendium Hall then!"

Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up. Without any hesitation, he immediately began heading to the cleanest hall of the three.

The building was even taller than the other two, and the old scent of books seemed to linger around the building. There was a particularly powerful formation set up around it, making it difficult for anyone to enter without the possession of an artifact to bypass it.

Upon seeing the formation, Zhang Xuan chuckled softly.

His current proficiency of formations was already on par with 7-star formation masters, and he possessed the Eye of Insight on top of that, Finding a flaw in the formation around the Compendium Hall to slip through it was an extremely easy task for him.

With sharp eyes, Zhang Xuan examined the formation, and a moment later, he found a small gap in the formation. He swiftly slipped through it.

While a soul was formless and intangible, making it impossible to perceive it with one's eyes or touch, it could disrupt the flow of spiritual energy in the air, thus betraying its presence. The interior of the formation happened to be rich in spiritual energy, which meant that Zhang Xuan would still have to proceed carefully within the formation.

Advancing forward through exploiting the flaws of the formation, it didn't take long for Zhang Xuan to arrive right before the entrance of the Compendium Hall.

There were two Saint 1-dan poison masters keeping guard. Zhang Xuan quickly calculated an ideal route to take before sneaking past the both of them discreetly and slipping into the Compendium Hall through the gaps in the door.

The first floor of the Compendium Hall was filled with many bookshelves with innumerable books shelved on top of them. Taking a swift glance, they were all regarding poison.

"Deciphering the Way of Poison", "Qing Yuanzi's 36 Art of Poison", "Neutralizing Poison Walkthrough", "Fundamental Theories to Poison Cultivation"...All kinds of books relating to poison could be seen placed all around the area, creating an amazing collection.

These were the blood and sweat of innumerable poison masters ever since the establishment of this Poison Hall branch ten thousand years ago. They were intermixed with both the correct and wrong interpretation of poison. To others, they would dare not read all of them recklessly for fear that they might end up confusing themselves. However, such a problem didn't exist for Zhang Xuan.

Sweeping his gaze across the room, Zhang Xuan swiftly found himself a comfortable position.

Alright, time to begin!

With such a thought in mind, Zhang Xuan began sweeping through rows of books with his sharp eyes.

Hualala!

Book after book was collected into the Library of Heaven's Path. Through compiling them together, a flawless Heaven's Path Poison Art was gradually being formed.

Two hours later, all of the books on the first level had been swiped clean.

"This is the 1-star Heaven's Path Poison Art..." Zhang Xuan took a glance at the compiled book in the Library of Heaven's Path before withdrawing his consciousness out and headed towards the second floor.

The layout of the Compendium Hall was similar to the libraries in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy. Each floor corresponded to a star each, and if one's rank hadn't reached the required level, one would be forbidden from accessing the floor.

While Zhang Xuan had already compiled the 1-star and 2-star Heaven's Path Poison Art back at the Red Lotus Mountain Ridge Poison Hall, the collection of books here was clearly much greater and more varied. Since he was already at the Poison Hall, it would be best to collect all of them. He wasn't in a rush for time anyway.

Besides, there was no saying that the method to saving Wei Ruyan would be contained in these seemingly unimportant books. As such, he dared not to get careless.

Soon, he finished taking in everything in the second floor.

After which, he moved on to the third floor.

...

While Zhang Xuan's soul slipped into the Compendium Library to browse through its books, a huge ruckus had broken out in the residence where his physical body was seated.

Staring at the tree where Senior Duan hung, many poison masters trembled in fear.

They had thought that the newly-arrived guest would end up being silently oppressed, but who could have thought that he was actually a rampaging dragon that devastated any who dared to provoke it!

With just a single move, he had knocked out the strongest Senior Duan Ren amongst them!

"Hurry up and report this to Vice Hall Master Ming..." Someone amongst the crowd shouted.

"Alright!" A poison master replied before heading anxiously in a certain direction.

Vice Hall Master Ming Zhen was a 7-star poison master, as well as Senior Duan Ren's teacher. The reason why Senior Duan Ren was able to get away with acting so arrogantly in the Poison Hall was due to his backing. For Senior Duan Ren to be pummeled by a newly-arrived fellow... without a doubt, Vice Hall Master Ming Zhen would surely fly into a terrible rage.

Rushing over, it didn't take long for the poison master to arrive at Vice Hall Master Ming Zhen's residence. He tried to enter it, but someone blocked him at the entrance.

"Vice Hall Master Ming is currently in a conference with the other elders. If you have something important to report, tell me and I will relay it to him instead." the guard spoke nonchalantly.

"Vice Hall Master Ming is in a conference?" Frowning, the poison master hesitated for a moment before he eventually made up his mind and reported, "Someone has pummeled and knocked out Senior Duan Ren!"

"Someone has pummeled and knocked out Senior Duan Ren?" the guard was taken aback by the abrupt news.

"Yes! The assailant goes by the name of Sun Qiang, and he is a guest whom Elder Xu has brought in." The poison master revealed everything he knew, not daring to hide anything.

"Alright, I got it. I will report it to Vice Hall Master Ming right now." The guard knew that Senior Duan Ren was a disciple which Hall Master Ming Zhen valued greatly and had high expectations of. In fact, the latter had been considering the matter of promoting Senior Duan Ren to become an elder of the Poison Hall as well, and it was

likely that the motion would be proposed in the near future.

Not daring to hesitate in the least, the guard hurriedly rushed in.

A moment later, he returned and beckoned the poison master in, "Vice Hall Master Ming Zhen invites you in."

Nodding, the poison master headed in.

Not too long later, he arrived at the main hall. Upon seeing the impressive line up within, he couldn't help but cower in fear.

Within the room wasn't just Vice Hall Master Ming Zhen but the other two vice hall masters too, as well as all of the 6-star pinnacle elders of the Poison Hall, with the exception of Elder Xu and Elder Xue.

"What happened?" Upon seeing the poison master enter the room, Vice Hall Master Ming Zhen turned his authoritative gaze upon him and asked.

Vice Hall Master Ming Zhen was a white-bearded old man who looked like he was in his sixties. His black robe, paired with his sharp and chilling face, granted him a powerful presence which induced others to cower before him.

"The matter is like this..." The poison master swiftly explained everything that he had seen earlier.

"You are saying that the guest whom Xu You brought in has willfully injured Duan Ren?" Vice Hall Master Ming Zhen's eyes narrowed in suppressed fury.

"Yes..." The poison master nodded fearfully.

"Very well! I have no idea where that lad came from, but how dare he cause trouble in the Poison Hall!" With a chilling glint in his eyes, Vice Hall Master Ming Zhen laughed coldly. "Bring me over. I want to meet the audacious man who dared to make a move against my student!"

"Yes!" Not daring to hesitate, the poison master hurriedly led the way.

"Vice Hall Master Ming, since we are free at the moment, why don't we accompany you there as well?"

"Indeed. Normally, guests at our Poison Hall would be so nervous as to dare not utter a single word at all, yet, this fellow actually dared to make a move on our men. I sure would like to meet the amazing figure he is."

The remaining two vice hall masters stood up simultaneously as well.

"We are also interested to meet the person whom Xu You has brought back from his trip!"

"How can I miss a matter as interesting as this?"

...

The remaining twenty elders smiled with an interested gleam in their eyes.

After spending so many years on this island, rarely were there any matter that could interest the poison masters. Thus, upon hearing that an arrogant guest had visited their Poison Hall, they were eager to catch the drama that would unfold very soon.

"Fine by me." Seeing that the two vice hall masters and the other elders wanted to tag along as well, Vice Hall Master Ming waved his hand casually before following the poison master, heading for Zhang Xuan's residence.

It didn't take him long to arrive at his destination. There, he saw his student and a few subordinates being hung pitifully atop a tree. Seemingly having suffered a heavy blow, his student had quite a few bones shattered, and his injuries were extremely severe.

"Damn it!" With a livid face, Vice Hall Master Ming Zhen clenched his fists tightly together.

The other party clearly knew that Duan Ren was his student, and yet, the other party still chose to deal Duan Ren such a vicious strike. This was a huge insult towards him as well.

"Open the doors!" Vice Hall Master Ming Zhen beckoned for one of the elders to take care of Duan Ren before heading over to the residence door and harrumphed coldly.

"V-vice Hall Master Ming... P-poison Master Sun said that..."

Upon seeing the sudden arrival of so many vice hall masters and elders, Li Yuan and

the others were scared speechless. With quivering lips, Li Yuan tried to explain the matter to them.

"Do my words mean nothing to you?" Vice Hall Master Ming's eyebrows shot up as he bellowed furiously.

"No! Of course not..." Knowing that it would be unwise to challenge the authority of a vice hall master, Li Yuan could only obediently open the doors for him.

He was intending to head in to inform Poison Master Sun Qiang of the matter in advance, but from the looks of it now, it seemed like he wouldn't get an opportunity to do so.

"Hmph!"

With a cold gaze, Vice Hall Master Min stepped into the residence, and the two vice hall masters and the other elders hurriedly followed him.

They were interested to meet the person who dared to beat Duan Ren into the pitiful state he was in.

After entering the residence, they soon saw a figure seated in the area which boasted the highest concentration of spiritual energy in the residence. His eyes were tightly shut, seemingly in the midst of his cultivation.

"You are Sun Qiang?" Seeing how the other party was still in the mood to cultivate despite their arrival, Vice Hall Master Ming's turned so dark that it seemed like ink would seep out from it.

After saying those words, he waited for a while, but the fellow in front him still refused to open his eyes, as if they were non-existent.

"Audacious! Do you know who I am?" Not expecting that a vice hall master like him would be snubbed so blatantly, Vice Hall Master Ming Zhen felt so furious that he could explode.

No matter, he was an esteemed 7-star poison master. It was one thing for the other party to not rise to his feet to welcome him, but to be unwilling to even open his eyes, the other party was inconceivably arrogant!

With so many people entering his residence and all the shouting that had gone on, he didn't believe that the other party would be oblivious to his presence!

If this was the level of awareness he had, he would have long died in this world. There was no way he could have survived this long!

Hu!

Despite bellowing furiously, there was still no response from the other party. It was as if the person in front of him couldn't hear him at all.

"You..." Raging with fury, Vice Hall Master Ming's face flushed crimson.

He had seen plenty of arrogant individuals in his life, but he had never one who dared to put on airs like that. Three vice hall masters and twenty elders, that was a line up that consisted of nearly the entire top echelon of the Poison Hall! Yet, despite calling repeatedly, the other party continued to sit nonchalantly on the floor, not bothering to respond at all...

"Audacious! Do you think that you can do as you please just because you have Xu You's backing? Very well, I would like to see how Xu You can help you out of this situation today!"

Unable to tolerate this blatant disrespect any longer, Vice School Head Ming roared furiously as his zhenqi burst forth from him, ready to make a move.

"Hahaha, Vice Hall Master Ming. How can you dirty your own hands teaching a person of this caliber a lesson? Allow me."

At this moment, a chuckle sounded in the room, and an elder stepped forward.

Chapter 998

The Invincible Zhang Xuan (1)

"Elder Huang?" Upon seeing who the one speaking was, Vice Hall Master Ming hesitated for a moment before nodding in agreement.

It was indeed beneath his standing as a 7-star poison master, an esteemed vice hall master, to make a move against the guest of an elder. It would cast him under the suspicion of oppressing his juniors. As such, it would be best if Elder Huang was willing to make the move for him.

Elder Huang's strength was not beneath Xu You's, reaching Saint 1-dan pinnacle as well. At the same time, his comprehension of poison had also reached 6-star pinnacle. With such strength, it should be more than sufficient for him to teach this fellow a lesson.

Upon receiving Vice Hall Master Ming's permission, Elder Huang stepped forward and glared at Sun Qiang with narrowed eyes, "Your name is Sun Qiang, isn't it? To keep your eyes shut even in all of our presence, you are truly presumptuous. However, it is presumptuous individuals like you who tend to have early deaths. I will give you three seconds to kneel down and apologize to Vice Hall Master Ming, and I can consider sparing your life. Otherwise, don't blame me for getting nasty..."

Three breaths later, the other party's eyes were still tightly shut, as if he was dead.

"I have already given you a chance, but you are the one who refused to grasp it. Very well, let's whether you boast strength comparable to the arrogance you are putting up!" With the other party ignoring him entirely, he seemed as if a clown speaking to himself in a mirror. Enraged, he raised his palm and struck it towards Zhang Xuan.

Boom!

An overwhelming surge of zhenqi burst forth from his fingers, and innumerable poison bits immediately shrouded the middle-aged man before him as if falling flower petals.

Tzzzzzzzz!

Before the poison bits could even come into contact with the middle-aged man, the flowers and plants in the courtyard had already begun to wither, turning as black as charcoal.

"That is... A Smile of Liberation Powder?" An elder exclaimed in astonishment.

A Smile of Liberation Powder was a poison specially concocted by Elder Huang. Just by a whiff, even a Saint 1-dan pinnacle expert would die within a smile. Due to the frightening potency of the poison, it was deeply feared even amongst the upper echelons of the Poison Hall.

"Not bad." Seeing that someone recognized the poison, Elder Huang nodded in glee.

These poison bits were indeed his greatest masterpiece. Since the other party didn't know his place, he would just have to ingrain it deeply into him!

Hualala!

In just a few moments, the poison powder fell upon 'Sun Qiang's' body, creating a layer of white flakes reminiscent of snow.

"A Smile of Liberation Powder can seep into one's body through the skin, so it is futile to hold one's breath. With so much of it on him, that fellow is a goner. Not even the deities will be able to save him at this point..." Upon seeing the sight, one of the elders shook his head and remarked.

Putting aside breathing in such a potent poison, even just a single flake falling on one could easily lead to fatality. Considering that Elder Huang had thrown so many of it at once and even infused it with his zhenqi, the poison should have already seeped into the middle-aged man's skin. At this point, it was already too late to save the other party.

"Wait a moment, something is wrong. Look!" Just as the crowd was lamenting over the imminent tragic death of the middle-aged man before them, another elder suddenly pointed forward and exclaimed. "Why does it seem like... nothing is happening to that fellow at all?"

Hearing that question, everyone quickly turned their sights over.

The person, who was seated cross-legged before them, was still in the same position as before, not moving in the least. His eyes were tightly shut, as if he was asleep. It was as if the A Smile of Liberation poison powder cast by Elder Huang was completely ineffective against the person before his eyes.

"Typically speaking, right after being poisoned by A Smile of Liberation, a person's body will start to convulse, his lips will uncontrollably curl upwards... Yet, this fellow is still showing the same nonchalant expression as before, as if his face has stiffened up... Elder Huang, could it be that your poison has lost its effectiveness?" Another elder couldn't help but ask.

"This..." Hearing those words, Elder Huang hurriedly took a closer look at the other party.

Even though the other party was completely motionless, as a 6-star pinnacle poison master, he could still easily discern whether the other party was poisoned or not.

A radiant complexion paired with smooth and supple skin... Not only did the other party show no signs of being poisoned, it seemed as if the other party had consumed some kind of incredible tonic, nourishing his body further...

The heck! Can't you at least squeeze out the slightest hint of being poisoned for me? At the very least, make your face redden a little...

Otherwise, how am I to face my fellow peers in the room?

"It is no wonder why that fellow is so arrogant. He must have consumed the antidote beforehand!

The more Elder Huang thought about it, the more furious he felt. "Since he doesn't fear poison, let's see if a mere Nascent Saint like him will be able to fend against my rampaging might!"

Right after saying those words, he sent a powerful punch right towards Zhang Xuan!

Elder Huang had no idea what kind of antidote the other party had consumed that actually rendered his A Smile of Liberation futile, but it was likely that he would only embarrass himself further if he were to continue using poison. Since that was the case, he felt that it would be safer for him to use brute force instead.

He had to let the other party learn the price of acting arrogant!

Hong long!

The strength of a Saint 1-dan pinnacle cultivator rampaged, and in an instant, a huge gust of wind was whipped up within the courtyard. The bluestone pavements on the ground creaked under the immense strain of the might, seemingly ready to shatter in innumerable pieces at any moment.

"That fellow... still isn't going to open his eyes?" an elder exclaimed.

Elder Huang was preparing his strongest technique, and the overwhelming zhenqi he exerted was so great that even his breathing had hastened... and yet, the target facing the attack, 'Sun Qiang', still refused to open his eyes. He remained motionless on the spot, not bothering to dodge or retaliate...

Wasn't this going a little too far?

Peng!

The fist which commanded incomparable might fell upon 'Sun Qiang's' face!

Kacha!

The sound of bones breaking echoed clearly within the room. Following which, everyone saw Elder Huang leaping backward furiously with his left arm clutching tightly onto his right arm. The unbearable pain in his arm left his face twitching uncontrollably, and tears glistened in his eyes.

"This..." Everyone blinked their eyes in a daze, dumbfounded.

Elder Huang had utilized his full strength to strike on the other party's face, and yet, without even scraping the other party's skin, his arm was broken instead...

Was this for real? Was that fellow that thick-skinned?

"Damn it, I will rip you into pieces!" Noticing everyone's bizarre gazes on him, Elder Huang felt so embarrassed that he could die. Roaring furiously, he drew out a sword and charged at the fellow before him.

"Elder Huang, you mustn't get reckless!"

Upon seeing Elder Huang's actions, everyone was astonished.

If that 'Sun Qiang' fellow were to die under Elder Huang's poison, he could still justify it as having failed to control his poison properly. On the other hand, the drawing of his sword could be interpreted as an attempt to kill in the Poison Hall. If the deed was really done, there would be no backing out.

Si la!

Blinded by his rage, Elder Huang couldn't hear anyone's voice anymore. He hacked his sharp sword down upon the fellow seated before him furiously, intending to split the fellow before him into two. However, just as the sword was about to land, the other party suddenly raised his palm and struck upwards.

Hong long long!

The loud rumbling of a thunder resounded deafeningly in the courtyard. Elder Huang's sword qi dissipated entirely under the immense momentum of the palm strike, and in the next moment, his head was forcefully struck into his chest.

Putong!

Elder Huang's body fell lifelessly onto the ground, never to move again.

"What?"

"Elder Huang was killed in a single palm strike?"

"That strike didn't just neutralize Elder Huang's attack, it rebounded Elder Huang's strength back upon him! Is that fellow really just at Nascent Saint?"

...

Looking at the dead Elder Huang, everyone's body stiffened.

That was an elder, a Saint 1-dan pinnacle expert! The other party was an existence who boasted equivalent strength to them, and yet... he was actually killed in a single palm strike...

Just how powerful could that palm be?

"He didn't even move the rest of his body at all, and his eyes had never opened at any point in time either..." A quivering voice sounded amidst the group.

Hearing those words, everyone suddenly recalled the situation back then, and it seemed like 'Sun Qiang' had been seated on the floor all along, moving only his palms. And more importantly... his eyes had never opened at any point in time!

In other words... the other party hadn't even got serious yet! It was a casual palm strike to the other party, and yet, it was sufficient to claim Elder Huang's life!

"There is something really uncanny about this fellow. Nevertheless, we can't allow him to get away scot-free for killing Elder Huang. Let's attack him together, don't let him escape!" A person roared.

In the next moment, the remaining nineteen elders swiftly flitted through the courtyard, surrounding Zhang Xuan tightly.

The reason why they held themselves back a moment ago was because it would be unseemly for elders like them to make a move on the juniors, and there would be no way they could account this matter to Elder Xu either. However, now that the other party had killed Elder Huang, there were no grounds for reconciliation anymore. Not even Elder Xu would be in a position to stop them anymore.

"Indeed, let's attack him together!"

"I sure do want to see if he is able to withstand by Yama Incapacitation Powder!"

...

Huala!

The nineteen elders struck simultaneously, and in an instant, the courtyard was suddenly filled with all kinds of poisonous mist. Several poisonous bugs and snakes leaped furiously towards Zhang Xuan, eager to sink their teeth into his flesh.

With so many lethal poisons compounded together, even a Saint 2-dan primary stage expert would find himself succumbing to the poison within seconds. Yet, when the mist finally scattered slightly, everyone was shocked to realize that... the other party

was still completely motionless, as if he couldn't even feel the poison around him.

"The antidote that fellow took is too potent, our poisons are completely useless against him... Let's just make a move on him straight. I don't believe that he will be able to withstand the attacks from all nineteen of us simultaneously!" Someone amidst the group bellowed, and the others nodded in agreement.

Despite having utilized all of their strongest poisons simultaneously, that fellow wasn't wounded in the slightest. There wasn't even the slightest hint of anomaly on his face. This went to show that something was amiss.

They had no idea how the other party managed to do it, but it seemed like poison was completely ineffective against him. Since that was the case... they had no choice but to settle it with violence!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Right after hearing that bellow, the nineteen elders charged straight for the middle-aged man seated at the middle.

Feeling the overwhelming force that had gathered around him, the seated 'Sun Qiang' seemed to have finally sensed that his life was in danger. Standing up, his figure flitted as if a streak of lightning, swiftly diving amongst the group.

Rather than Nascent Saint, the agility of his movements was more like that of a Saint 2-dan expert. While threading nimbly amongst the many attacks headed for him, he retaliated with fists of his own as well. His punches seemed to be direct and straightforward, but for some reason, it seemed to be infused with some compelling force that prevented them from evading them.

Peng peng peng peng!

Every single punch launched would accurately strike upon an elder, sending the latter flying away. The overwhelming strength that the other party exerted was far beyond what all of them combined could handle.

On top of that, it wasn't just the other party's punch that they had to guard against. The other party's leg arts were formidable as well. His kicks were abrupt, swift, and precise, making it nigh difficult to guard against it.

"H-h-his eyes... His eyes are still closed!"

The longer the fight went on for, the more stifled the elders felt. Nineteen Saint 1-dan pinnacle experts had encircled a Nascent Saint cultivator and attacked him simultaneously, and yet, not only did the other party manage to remain unharmed before their assault, they even realized that they were gradually being suppressed... And most importantly of all, the other party's eyes were still shut!

It was as if the other party was sleepwalking! All of his actions and movements seemed to be instinctive, derived solely from his combat instincts!

To be able to overwhelm the simultaneous assault of all nineteen of them just by his combat instincts in itself...

The elders felt as if they were going insane.

The vice hall masters watching the situation also couldn't help but gape at the inconceivable situation.

"We need to help them! The elders won't be able to hold on for much longer..." One of the three vice hall masters exclaimed.

It was in consideration of their standing that they were unwilling to make a move earlier. After all, for 7-star poison masters like them to lower themselves to deal with a measly Nascent Saint cultivator was truly unseemly... However, at this point, they realized that if they didn't make a move soon, the nineteen elders could very well end up in the same state as Elder Huang. That would be a devastating blow to the Poison Hall.

"Alright, let's go together..."

Vice Hall Master Ming Zhen's eyebrows shot up as he raised his palm and charged forward.

Chapter 999

The Invincible Zhang Xuan (2)

Vice Hall Master Ming Zhen was a 7-star primary poison master, and he possessed a cultivation of Saint 2-dan primary stage. Exerting his full might, an immense pressure fell from the heavens, crumbling the walls of the courtyard into dust.

Seeing that Ming Zhen had made a move, the other two also stepped forward without any hesitation.

Just like Ming Zhen, they were also Saint 2-dan primary stage cultivators which possessed astounding fighting prowess.

With the three experts collaborating with one another, an overwhelming force swept into the surroundings like a calamitous tide, destroying everything in its path.

"What is going on?"

Seeing the collapse of the courtyard walls and sensing the fearsome shockwave that lingered in the air as a result of the fighting, Li Yuan and the others, who were still guarding outside at the moment, turned their eyes over, and upon taking a look, their faces began twitching uncontrollably.

Wasn't Vice Hall Master Ming going to just get even with Poison Master Sun over this matter? Why would they suddenly start fighting like that?

Not to mention... for the three vice hall masters and all of the elders to gang up against a mere Nascent Saint cultivator... Weren't they being a little too shameless?

"It seems like... Elder Huang has died..." A quivering voice sounded in the air.

It was after hearing the voice did Li Yuan notice that an old man was lying on the ground with his head sunk into his neck, as if someone had smacked it in with his palm. It was an extremely eerie and bone-chilling sight.

Without a doubt, that was definitely a fatal blow!

"Most likely, they must have provoked Poison Master Sun, and out of anger, the latter ended up doing this..." Li Yuan's heart jolted in fear as he continued staring intently at the situation.

With the three Saint 2-dan vice hall masters joining the fray, the tables seemed to have been turned. Having to fend off more than 22 experts simultaneously, Poison Master Sun was placed under great pressure. With a forceful strike, Poison Master Sun knocked two of the elders who were engaging him at the moment before swiftly flicking both of his wrists.

A spear appeared in his right hand and a sword appeared in his left.

Hu la!

With a simple pierce, the spear whizzed across spear and appeared right before an elder. In the blink of an eye, the spear had already impaled the other party's throat. Under the immense force of the pierce, the lifeless body of the elder was sent flying out.

Moving simultaneously along with the piercing spear, the sword in Zhang Xuan's left hand moved in an elegant arc, and a sword qi harnessing the inviolable authority of the heavens abruptly burst forth.

The elder who was standing to the left of Zhang Xuan hadn't expected that he would be able to effectively utilize both weapons simultaneously... Before he could react, he suddenly felt a chilling sensation strike his neck. In the next moment, as his head rolled off its base, a fountain of blood spurted forth from the neck of the decapitated body.

"He is killing the elders..." A chilling sensation abruptly assaulted Li Yuan and the others, and they began shivering involuntarily.

Each of these elders was reminiscent of transcendental existences to them, mighty figures whom they could never hope to equal... Yet, at this moment, it was as if someone had torn the veil of mystery and grandeur shrouding them. Like any other mortals, they were bleeding and dying...

That powerful impact from the sight left their throat tensing up, rendering it difficult for them to breathe.

"Doesn't it seem like... throughout the course of the entire battle, Poison Master Sun hasn't even opened his eyes once?" Someone amongst the group suddenly exclaimed in astonishment.

After hearing those words, it suddenly dawned on Li Yuan and the others that that was indeed the case. From the start of the battle until now, Poison Master Sun Qiang had his eyes tightly shut, seemingly only retaliating instinctively to whoever who was attacking him.

Every spear that whizzed forth would have the throat of an elder in its path. Every single sword slash would send an elder into death's embrace...

It was as if the other party was Yama 1 himself, an unstoppable force which they couldn't hope to stop no matter how they struggled.

in just a few moments, another ten more elders were killed.

"This won't do. If this goes on, all of the elders will be killed by that fellow..." Seeing the number of elders of the Poison Hall swiftly diminishing, Vice Hall Master Ming panicked.

If this were to go on, in less than ten breaths, every single elder in the Poison Hall could very well lose their lives here!

To think that a Nascent Saint cultivator would be able to claim the upper hand while rivaling 22 Saint realm experts simultaneously and even kill ten of them consecutively... Just what kind of monster was he?

"All elders, listen to my command! Retreat to the backline, I, Vice Hall Master Ming, and Vice Hall Master Qian will deal with that fellow ourselves!" Realizing the same, another vice hall master commanded with an authoritative voice.

As there were too many people involved in the fight earlier, and most of them were their close friends on top of that, they were unable to exert their full might as Saint 2-dan cultivators for fear of harming them accidentally. What they had to do now was to have the other elders back out of the battle first so that the three of them could better collaborate with one another to kill the fellow before them!

"Yes!" Upon hearing the command, the remaining elders heaved a sigh of relief. They hurriedly leaped out of the battle with fear reflected in their eyes.

Honestly speaking, there was really something unsettling about that fellow. It was one thing for the other party to be impervious to their poisons, their greatest weapon, but how could the other party wield such frightening physical and zhenqi strength as well?

It was as if he was a gargantuan monster packed in the form of a human, wielding inhuman might in every single one of his strikes.

Despite so many of them teaming up against him, he was still able to emerge unscathed and even kill more than ten of them so easily... Not to mention, from the start to the end, he had never opened his eyes at all!

If he was already so powerful without his eyes, how frightening would he become when he opened them?

If only they had known earlier, they would have never gotten involved in this matter... From the very start, this was a matter caused by the student of Vice Hall Master Ming. It had nothing to do with them, and they were supposed to be there as mere spectators...

...

Right after the elders left, the three vice hall masters swiftly surrounded 'Sun Qiang'. Driving zhenqi in their body to the limits, they launched powerful blows one after another towards the other party.

Hualala!

With the combined strength of three Saint 2-dan acting against him, a powerful force sealed the space around Zhang Xuan tightly, effectively caging him in.

Despite being trapped, Zhang Xuan showed no signs of faltering at all. On the contrary, he seemed to be getting more and more powerful as the fight went on.

All of a sudden, with a piercing shrill, the spear in Zhang Xuan's right hand burst forth.

Ding ding ding ding!

The spear tip struck the walls of the cage forcefully. In the blink of an eye, cracks began appearing on the stable wall of zhenqi. Following right after, a sword sliced through

the cracks in the wall.

Huala!

Just like that, the powerful Zhenqi Spatial Lock was sliced into two.

Pu! Pu! Pu!

Vice Hall Master Ming Zhen and the others spurted fresh blood simultaneously as horror surfaced in their eyes.

For a Nascent Saint cultivator to tear apart the Zhenqi Spatial Lock set up by three Saint 2-dan experts so easily... the other party's strength had far exceeded their expectations! Furthermore, what was even more frightening was that the zhenqi harnessed by the other party seemed to have no bounds!

Despite executing such powerful attacks multiple times within a short frame of time, the other party was still as vigorous as ever, as if those attacks hadn't depleted him in the least!

Just how in the world did he do it?

"Trinity of Heaven and Earth Formation!" Bellowing anxiously, Vice Hall Master swiftly flitted to the side and assumed a specific position.

Hearing his words, the other two vice hall masters nodded and swiftly got into their positions as well.

Trinity of Heaven and Earth Formation!

This was a formation that could amplify their combined fighting prowess. As long as they were to use it well, even a Saint 2-dan pinnacle expert would be no match for them!

Hu!

As soon as they got into position, their raging zhenqi began connecting with one another, forming something reminiscent of a metal chain.

Seemingly sensing a threat from their movements, 'Sun Qiang' took a step back and

kept the spear in his hand with a flick of his wrist. Even so, his eyes still didn't open.

"Go!"

Tzzzzzz!

With the formation augmenting them, the aura of the three vice hall masters surged. Drawing their swords, they flicked their wrists and sent innumerable surges of sword qi towards Zhang Xuan as they charged forward.

However, before any of the sword qi could strike 'Sun Qiang', the latter abruptly leaped up and kicked thrice consecutively in the air.

The three kicks didn't seem to have any particular rhythm to them, but yet, they landed accurately in their path of movement. With just this simple move, their collaborative offense was sent into disarray.

"He... broke the Trinity of Heaven and Earth Formation?"

Upon seeing this sight, the surviving elders narrowed their eyes in astonishment.

The three kicks might seem to be random and illogical, but it had destroyed the tempo of the Trinity of Heaven and Earth Formation, thus effectively nullifying it!

To be able to overcome such a formidable formation with just a couple of kicks, could it be that the other party possessed deep understanding in formations as well?

It was one thing for the other party to be so powerful, but to have such a deep understanding of formations on top of that... how were they supposed to win against this freak?

Not only would their formations be completely ineffective against the other party, the other party could even utilize formations against them as well. The situation was very disadvantageous to them.

Puhe!

While the elders were still overwhelmed with shock, 'Sun Qiang', who was still surrounded by the three vice hall masters, abruptly swept his sword forth, severing Vice Hall Master Ming Zhen's arm along with his entire shoulder. Blood immediately

spurted frenziedly in the air.

"AHHHHH!!!!" With a cry of agony, Vice Hall Master Ming Zhen hurriedly retreated backward with a pale face. At this point, he could no longer find the strength to fight on any longer.

No matter how he thought about it, the situation was just inconceivable to him. How could the collaboration of three Saint 2-dan experts fail to subdue a mere Nascent Saint cultivator?

...

With the formation broken, there was no longer anything to fear from the trio anymore. 'Sun Qiang' advanced towards the other two remaining vice hall masters. With the sword in his hand, he rendered them completely incapable of retaliating, leaving them no choice but to retreat continuously.

"Wait a moment... is it just me, or is Sun Qiang's offense always targeted towards the person who is attacking him at the present moment? As long as one were to stop his attack, he wouldn't pursue the other party any further..." All of the sudden, an elder suddenly exclaimed.

"Now that you speak of it... that does seem to be the case!" Another elder nodded in agreement.

Thinking back, as powerful as Sun Qiang's fighting prowess was, he didn't just attack any of them randomly. Instead... it seemed like his attacks were only focused on whoever that was attacking him!

It was almost as if... he was moving on reflex...

"Vice Hall Master Qian and Vice Hall Master Sun, stop attacking him! There is a very good chance that he will cool down once you stop your offense!" Upon realizing this point, one of the elders hurriedly shouted over.

"Stop attacking him?" Hearing that shout, the two vice hall masters suddenly recalled the details of the battle and realized the same anomaly as well. With a frown, they leaped out from the area of battle.

Hula!

As soon as they leaped away, the other party, which was sending out innumerable lethal sword qi at them a moment ago, abruptly lowered his sword before keeping it with a flick of his wrist.

Hu!

Following which, he sat down cross-legged on the floor once more, paying no heed to the huge crowd around him at all.

"This..." Seeing that the other party had finally stopped his offense, the duo heaved a sigh of relief. As the tension finally left their body, they realized that they were completely soaked with cold sweat.

Had it not been for that elder realizing the anomaly regarding the other party's attack, it would just be a matter of time before they were killed.

For a Nascent Saint to kill a dozen Saint 1-dan pinnacle experts and corner three Saint 2-dan experts to the point where they could hardly catch a breath...

Where did Elder Xu find this monster from?

"It seems like... he was in some kind of trance due to his cultivation. Rather than attacking us consciously, it is a reflex action from his body in response to danger..." Vice Hall Master Qian remarked.

"This..."

Hearing the other party's explanation, everyone contemplated for a moment before nodding in agreement.

There was some sense in what the other party had said. From the start to the end, 'Sun Qiang' had been sitting there silently. It was only upon their offense that he was forced to retaliate...

Furthermore, throughout the course of the battle, he only retaliated against those who were attacking him at that moment. Those who had attempted to claim his life ended up having their lives claimed by him instead. Thinking about it now, it seemed they had only survived the ordeal because they had held back in their attacks...

"If even his reflexes are so powerful... just how formidable will he be in a conscious

state?" An elder trembled in fear as he spoke.

Everyone fell silent.

Reflexes were the instinctive reactions of a body in face of a certain stimulus. Actions made under such circumstances were devoid of consideration, so naturally, one's fighting prowess would be limited.

Yet, under such a state, the other party was actually able to corner nearly all of the elders and vice hall masters of the Poison Hall... If that Sun Qiang fellow were to recover from his state of cultivation, wouldn't he become a huge threat to all of them?

Who in the Poison Hall would be able to stop him?

"Quick, call Elder Xu over!" Unable to stand it any longer, Vice Hall Master Qian commanded anxiously.

"It seems like Elder Xu has gone to meet the hall master..." One of the elders replied.

"Call the hall master here as well then!" Vice Hall Master Qian snapped.

Gritting his teeth, he turned his gaze towards the dead elders by the side, and tears began streaming down his eyes.

What the heck was this?

When had their Poison Hall suffered such great grievances?

Chapter 1000

My Precious

In the residence where the hall master resided, Elder Xu was seated by the side with a slight smile on his face.

"You are saying that it is due to a righteous poison master named Sun Qiang who saved you despite the dangers that you are able to return to the Poison Hall?" An old man seated opposite to Elder Xu asked.

With an appearance reminiscent of a person in his sixties or seventies, the old man had an amiable smile on his face. Had one not known better, it would have been impossible to imagine that this old man was actually the head of the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall, a 7-star poison master!

"That's right. That Poison Master Sun is a very righteous person, and he possesses both courage and wits. If not for him, I would have died just like Elder Xue..." Elder Xu's eyes gleamed in admiration and respect as he spoke about Sun Qiang.

To be able to save him from the hands of a Saint 4-dan expert, the courage and wits that were required to do so was something that too few in the world possessed.

"For a Nascent Saint to be able to face an expert of that caliber straight without faltering, he is indeed a rare talent. Alright, I shall approve of the matter. He will be given an opportunity to take the poison master examination to join our Poison Hall!" The old man stroked his beard as he said with a smile.

"Thank you, hall master!" Elder Xu hurriedly stood up and clasped his fist. With a look of confidence, he continued, "Rest assured, you won't regret the decision you made today. Poison Master Sun is definitely a trustworthy person whom we can leave our backs to!"

"It is rare for you to offer such high compliments to someone. I will be looking forward to meeting Poison Master Sun then..." The hall master nodded.

Halfway through his words, a person suddenly rushed into the room while exclaiming,

"Hall master!"

"Elder Feng, what's wrong?" Turning around, Elder Xu recognized the person to be a fellow elder of the Poison Hall, Feng Ping.

However, the current Elder Feng was vastly different from how he was usually. His nose was crooked, his face was swollen, and his body was filled with many bloodstains. It was as if he had just undergone some kind of life-and-death situation.

"What's wrong? You still dare to ask me what's wrong?" Upon seeing Elder Xu, Feng Ping suddenly felt immense rage coursing through his body. Roaring furiously, he charged at Elder Xu, seemingly wanting to tear the other party apart.

Were it not for Xu You bringing that fellow here, would their Poison Hall suffer such tragic casualties today?

"Elder Feng, it is unseemly for an elder like you to make a move on your peers without any warning! Speak, what happened?" the hall master bellowed with a frown.

"Hall master..." Upon hearing the bellow, Elder Feng hesitated for a moment before stopping. Clenching his jaws tightly together, he spoke indignantly, "Fourteen elders of our Poison Hall have just been killed! The only ones surviving are me, Elder Du, and four others. Even Hall Master Ming had his entire arm severed at the shoulder, and he is still in a precarious state at the moment..."

"What? Fourteen elders have just been killed? Hurry up and explain yourself!" Shocked by the news, the hall master abruptly got to his feet and stared at Elder Feng with narrowed eyes.

There were only a total of 22 elders in the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall. It was just a moment ago which he had just received news of Elder Xue's death... and in the blink of an eye, another fourteen elders were killed?

These elders should have been in the Poison Hall, and for them to be killed... could it be that they have been invaded by enemies?"

"The culprit is... the guest whom Elder Xu brought in, Sun Qiang!" Elder Feng spat through gritted teeth.

"Sun Qiang? What happened?" Astonished, Elder Xu staggered.

"This is what happened..."

Elder Feng swiftly explained everything that had happened, including how Duan Ren had challenged Sun Qiang, Vice Hall Master Ming flying into a rage, as well as... how they encircled Sun Qiang, only to be killed themselves.

"How could this be..." After hearing the explanation, Elder Xu suddenly felt the vision before him blacking out.

I know that I said that those within the Poison Hall respect the strong, and you don't have to show any mercy to them. But... you really don't have to go to the extent of killing fourteen elders of the Poison Hall!

It was just a moment ago that I said that you are a righteous and trustworthy person, and in the next moment, you caused me such a trouble... How do you expect me to face the other party like that?

"Let's go over and take a look!" Shooting a cold glance at Elder Xu, the hall master flung his sleeves before hurriedly following Elder Feng out.

Naturally, Elder Xu had no choice but to tag along.

Not too long later, they arrived at the accommodation Elder Xu had prepared for Zhang Xuan, and it didn't take long for them to notice that the ground was filled with corpses.

These men were Saint 1-dan pinnacle experts, masters of poison. Outside, they could easily rival three to four ordinary Saint 1-dan pinnacle cultivators easily, and yet, within just a few moments... they had turned into cold corpses lying on the ground.

Scanning the area, he soon caught sight of the culprit, Sun Qiang. The latter was still seated cross-legged on the ground, cultivating with his eyes tightly shut, as if he had nothing to do with the horror that had just occurred a moment ago.

"Elder Huang, Elder Li, Elder Liu..." Looking at the corpses on the ground, the hall master felt a lump in his throat. Subconsciously, he clenched his trembling hands tightly into fists.

These were the men who had accompanied him for several centuries of his life, and yet, within just a few moments, they were slaughtered clean by that fellow!

More importantly, the culprit was still dared to cultivate fearlessly on the spot... Wasn't he snubbing their Poison Hall way too much!

"Hall master, you must kill that fellow and avenge our brothers!" Vice Hall Master Ming rushed forward and pleaded desperately.

He had already had his arm bandaged, and he had consumed some recovery medicine to alleviate his condition as well. However, the injury he had sustained was simply too severe that it was impossible for him to make a full recovery. To put it in harsh words, he had been crippled.

"Hall master, that fellow is simply too arrogant. He doesn't even bother to open his eyes when he fights us. It will be a calamity to the Poison Hall if we were to leave such an imperious fellow lurking amongst us..."

"We must kill him. Otherwise, how can we face our dead brothers? This is a matter regarding the dignity of our Poison Hall!"

...

The other two vice hall masters and elders roared in agreement.

As one of the most feared occupations on the Master Teacher Continent, others would flee in fright whenever they appeared. When had they suffered such grievance such as to have fourteen of their elders killed by a fellow with his eyes closed?

"Don't worry. No one has ever gotten away scot-free after causing trouble in the Poison Hall!" Waving his hand grandly, the hall master turned to Vice Hall Master Qian and instructed, "Apprehend Xu You and have him imprisoned. After I deal with this fellow, I will interrogate him personally!"

"Yes!" Upon hearing the order, the elders hurriedly encircled Elder Xu to prevent him from escaping.

"Hall master!" Not expecting the situation to unfold in such a manner, Elder Xu exclaimed in panic. Yet, there was nothing he could do in this situation.

There was no way he could explain himself.

Back when Poison Master Sun accompanied him to the Poison Hall, the other party

still seemed perfectly normal. Thinking back, the other party even promised him to keep a low profile... Yet, within the short span of time which he went to report something to the hall master, the other party actually killed fourteen elders...

Is this your definition of low profile?

You are clearly not here to take the poison master examination but to wipe our Poison Hall off the face of the world!

But as stifled as he was, Elder Xu knew that he owed his life to Poison Master Sun. After a moment of hesitation, he still couldn't help but speak up, "Hall master, Poison Master Sun isn't the type of person to kill the innocent. There might be some kind of misunderstanding here..."

"Seal his mouth!" the hall master roared furiously.

Fourteen elders of the Poison Hall had been killed, and Elder Xu still dared to play this matter off as a misunderstanding. If a misunderstanding could justify this matter, what else in the world couldn't be justified?

"Yes!" Vice Hall Master Qian nodded before walking up to Elder Xu. With a tap of his finger, he sealed Elder Xu's ability to speak.

Seeing that Elder Xu had been dealt with, the hall master finally turned his gaze back to the middle-aged man seated before him and spoke menacingly, "Sun Qiang, is it? To dare to venture alone to the Poison Hall to cause trouble, I have to admit that you do have guts. However... regardless of who you are or what you are here for, since you are already here, you need not think about stepping out of here alive!"

Walking up to Zhang Xuan, the hall master tapped his finger lightly, and a row of beetles, roughly around the size of a fingernail each, flew forth. There were exactly nine of them.

An old gold color shell on their back and wings that reflected sunlight off its body, they had a particularly disconcerting appearance.

"Those are our hall master's Darkgold Venom Beetles!"

"These beetles contain a lethal poison which can kill even a Saint 3-dan expert easily!"

"Indeed. Our hall master had to pay a heavy price in order to nurture these Darkgold Venom Beetles. Just counting the saint herbs by itself, those beetles had already eaten more than a hundred of them... But fortunately, his investment paid off. It was arduous and expensive, but he managed to nurture nine of them!"

"Each of these nine bugs is able to poison a Saint 3-dan expert to death individually. With the nine of them gathered, even a Saint 4-dan expert would have to flee in fear. To release all of them simultaneously... it seems like our hall master is truly enraged!"

"That fellow is done for. Although I don't know what kind of antidotes he consumed to render all of our poisons ineffective, there is no way that it will be able to neutralize the Darkgold Venom Beetles of our hall master!"

...

Upon seeing the hall master release his Darkgold Venom Beetle, everyone's eyes lit up.

Every single one of them had nurtured their own poisonous bug or snake at some point in time, but in terms of deadliness, there was none that could come close to comparing up to the hall master's Darkgold Venom Beetle.

Just a single one was sufficient to poison a Saint 3-dan expert. It was no wonder why it would be an object of fear for many!

Should the hall master intend to start a massacre, these nine Darkgold Venom Beetles could easily bring extinction upon the entire Hongyuan City.

This was the frightening might of a 7-star poison master!

In everyone's view, regardless of how potent the antidote Sun Qiang had consumed was, the most he could do was to neutralize their poison powder. In face of a poisonous bug as formidable as the Darkgold Venom Beetle, there could only be one outcome—death!

"Wuuuuuuuu!!!"

Forming a stark contrast to everyone look of anticipation, however, was Elder Xu's panicked muffled shouting. However, with his ability to speak sealed, he wasn't able to say anything at all, so he could only cry anxiously by the side.

Ignoring the looks of amazement from the crowd, the hall master flicked his finger grimly, and nine droplets of blood flew forth. The nine Darkgold Venom Beetles swallowed a droplet each, and their colors grew even brighter.

"Go!" With a furious bellow, the hall master pointed his finger towards Sun Qiang on the floor with killing intent seething in his eyes.

Weng weng weng!

Upon hearing the command, the nine beetles flew forward, and in the blink of an eye, they were already right before Zhang Xuan.

Seemingly unaware of the dangers lurking around him, Zhang Xuan remained seated in the ground with his eyes tightly shut, not moving in the least.

Hu!

Seeing that the other party had no intentions of dodging, the hall master sneered coldly. He controlled the beetles remotely and had them land all over Zhang Xuan's body, be it his arm, neck, or legs, anywhere his skin was exposed.

Kacha! Kacha! Kacha!

The beetles bit down firmly, and venomous fluid flowed from the beetle's mouth into Zhang Xuan's body.

"They have bitten him!"

"As soon as the Darkgold Venom Beetle bites down on its target, venomous fluid will immediately flow from its mouth into the target's bloodstream, and within just three breaths, the target will meet his demise!"

"To be bitten by all nine beetles simultaneously, it will be a miracle if he can even survive a single breath..."

...

Everyone thought that the fellow would flee in fright after seeing the Darkgold Venom Beetles, but who would have thought that he would remain seated on the floor, allowing the nine beetles act as they pleased. With all nine of the beetles biting him

simultaneously, not even the deities could possibly be able to save him anymore!

Hu! Hu!

Right after biting Zhang Xuan, the nine Darkgold Venom Beetles flew up once more. However, before they could get far, their heads suddenly slanted to the side, as if intoxicated.

Padah! Padah! Padah!

Following which, they abruptly fell to the grounds. Their legs twitched for a few moments before falling still altogether.

Pu!

The hall master's face paled, and blood spewed from his mouth. He staggered eight steps back before falling weakly to the ground. Raising his gaze, he looked at his fallen beetles with a look of horror.

"My precious..."



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